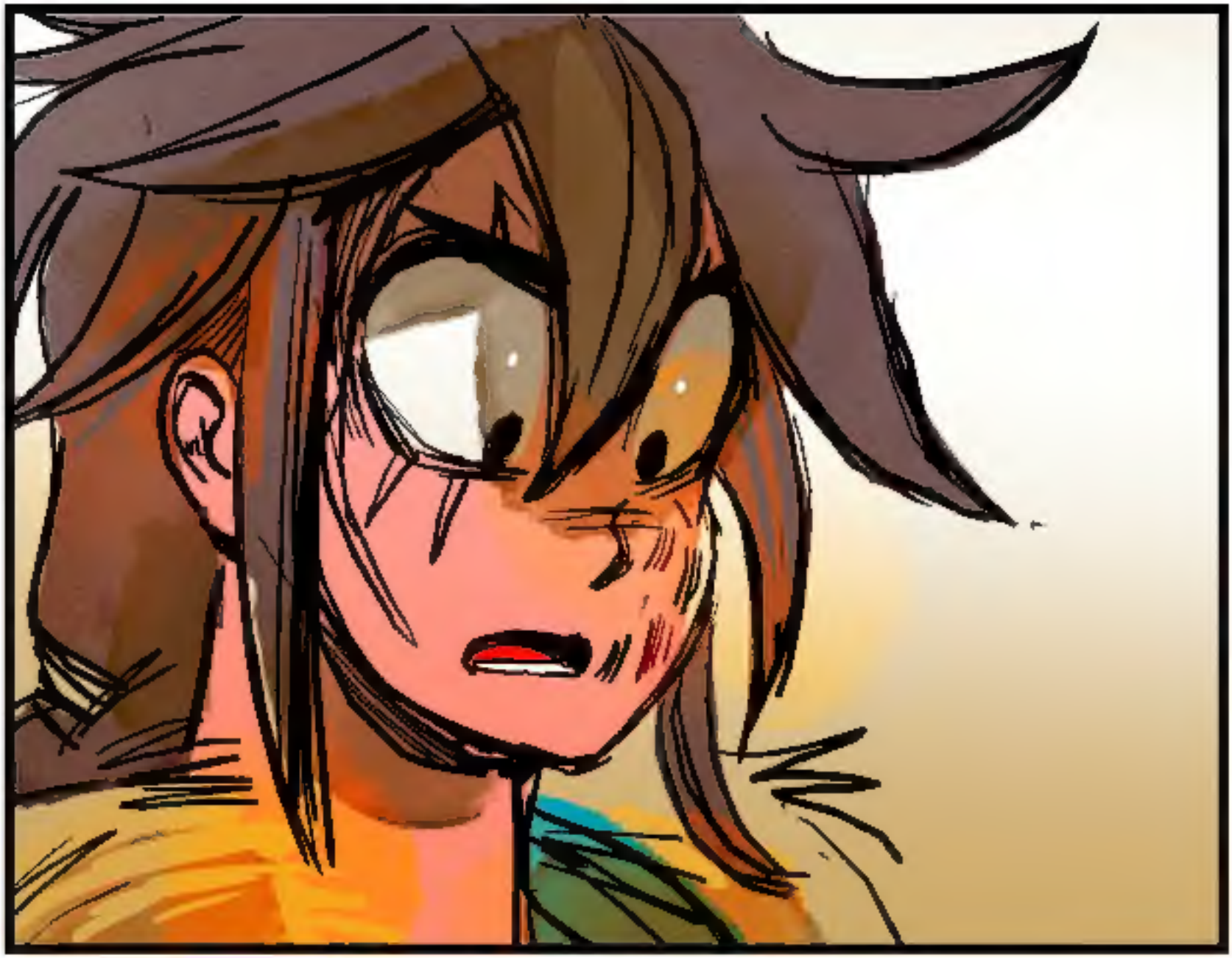
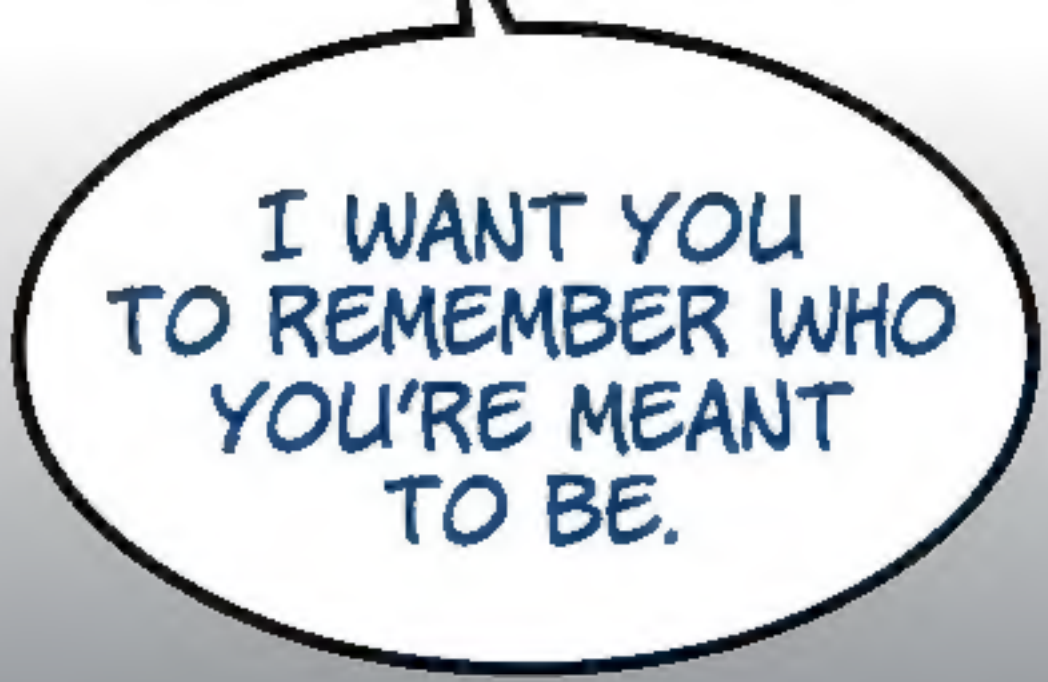
WHAT DO YOU WANT, KODYA!?
YOU HAVE THE SWORD, SO JUST TAKE IT AND LEAVE!

SWOOSH

THUD

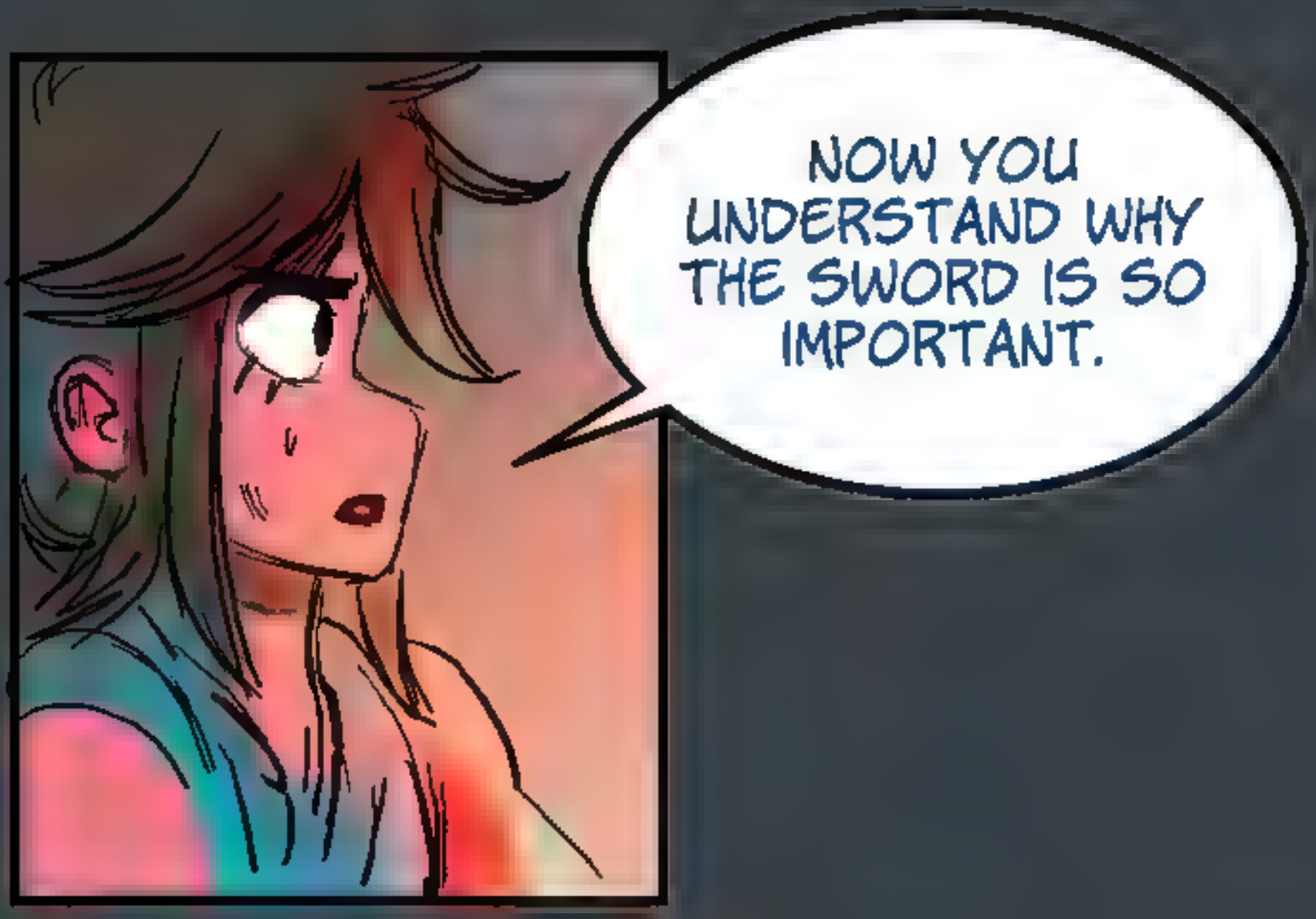



I WANT YOU
TO REMEMBER WHO
YOU'RE MEANT
TO BE.

CRACKLE
CRACKLE

CRACKLE

SO... YOU'RE SAYING THAT IF YOU HADN'T KILLED ME, I WOULD HAVE WOKE UP WITHOUT ANY MEMORY OF WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE?

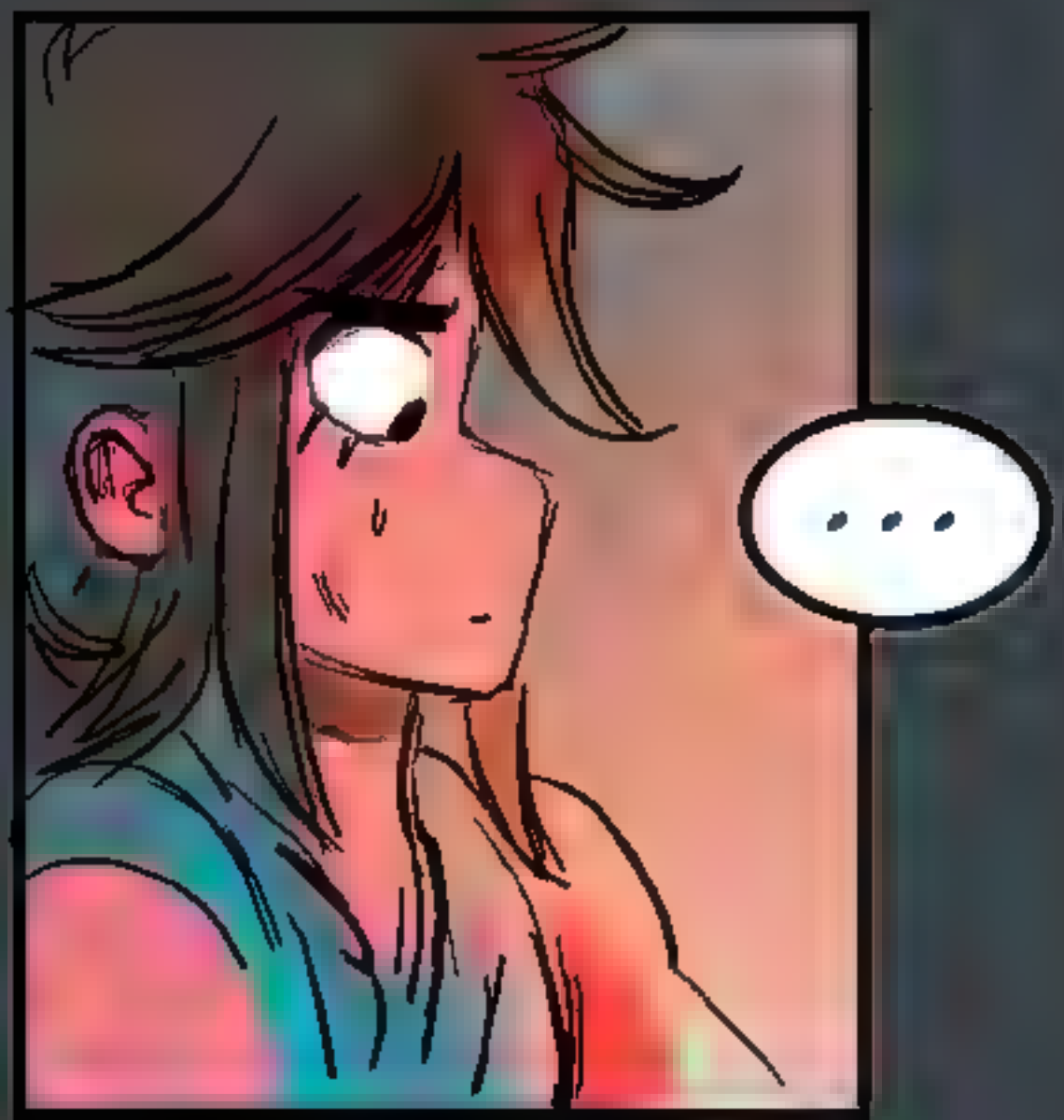

NOW YOU UNDERSTAND WHY THE SWORD IS SO IMPORTANT.

...
NOT QUITE...

I KNOW THAT NOTHING IN THIS PLACE HAS BEEN NORMAL, BUT STILL...
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE...

HOW CAN KILLING SOMEONE BRING THEM BACK TO LIFE? THAT'S COMPLETELY ILLOGICAL EVEN FOR THIS PLACE.

WHY SHOULD I TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT?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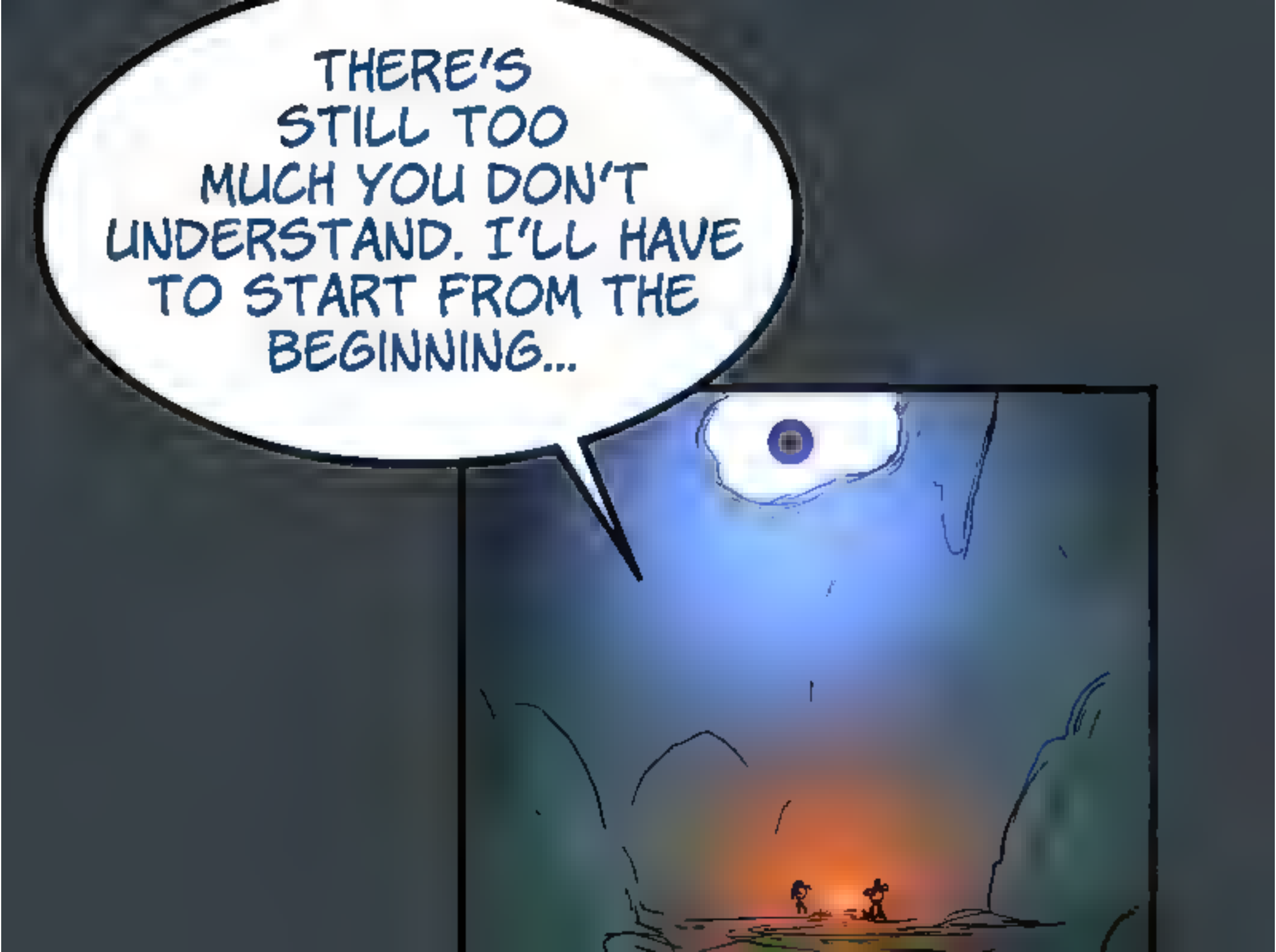
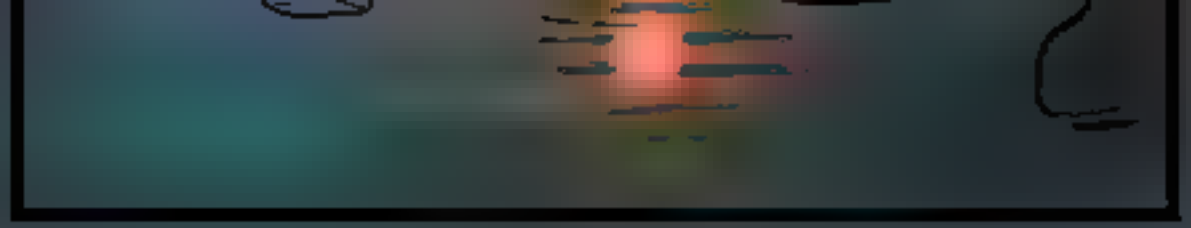

THERE'S STILL TOO MUCH YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I'LL HAVE TO START FROM THE BEGINNING...

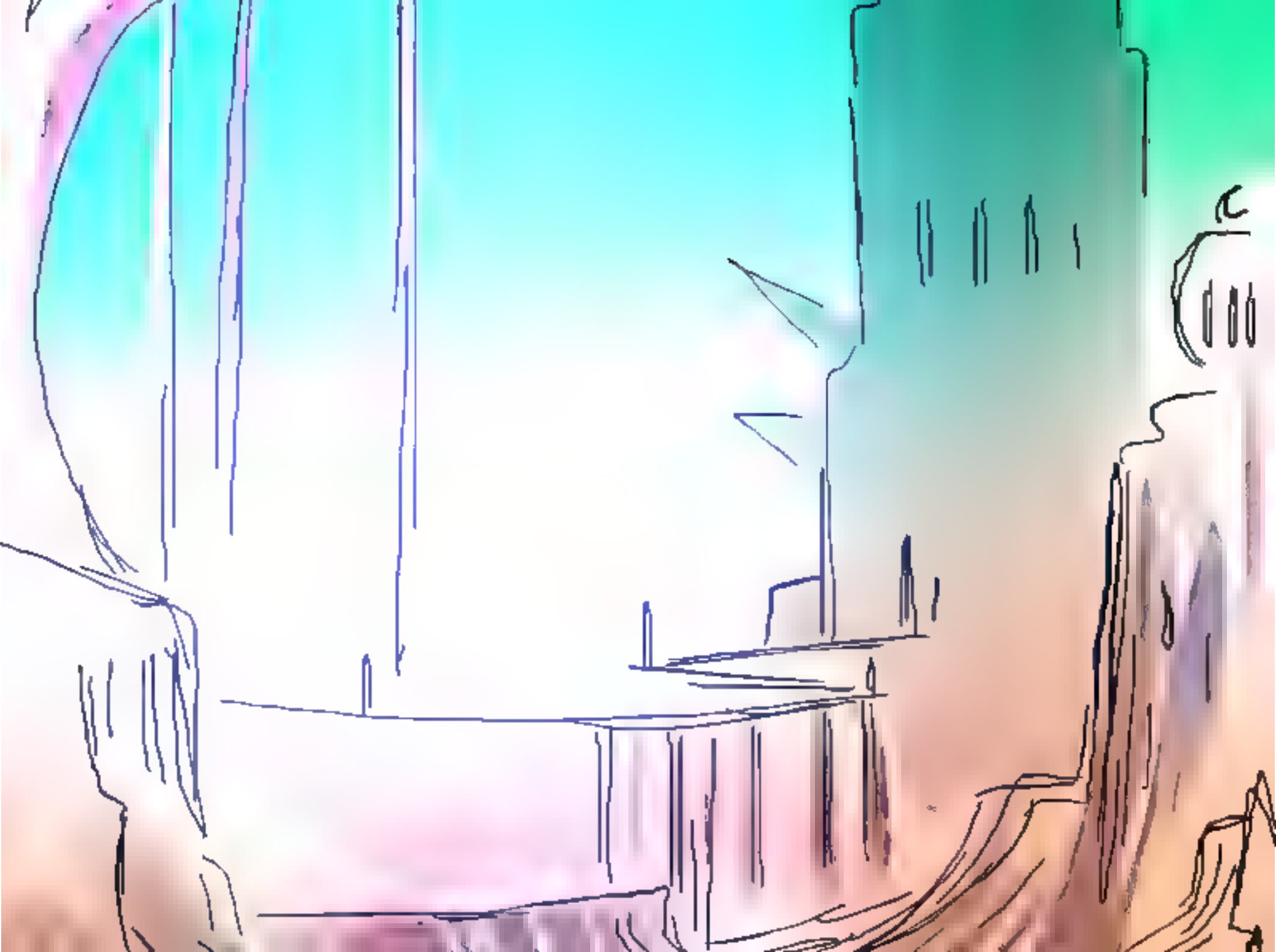


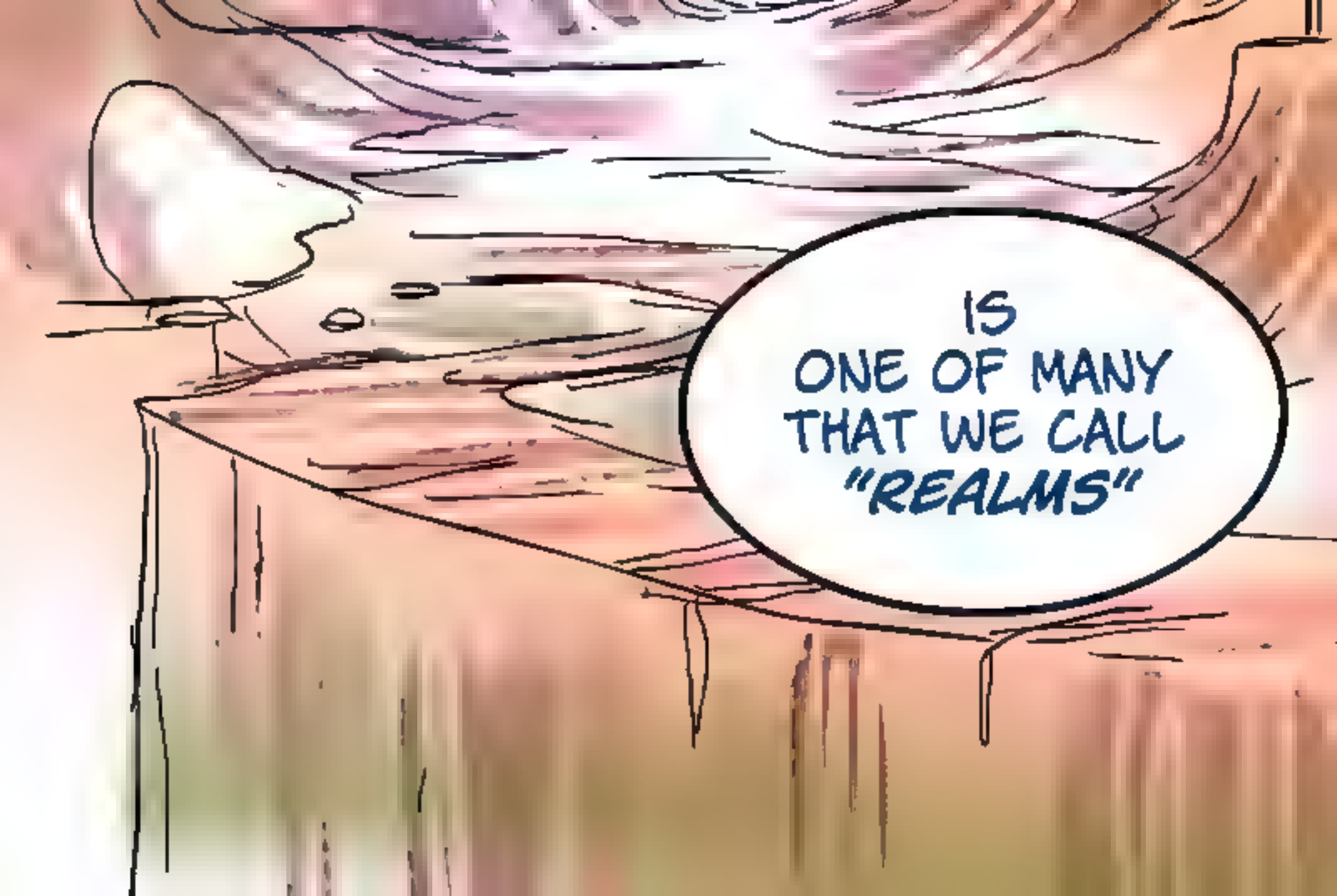
ROOM of
SWORDS

CHAPTER 32

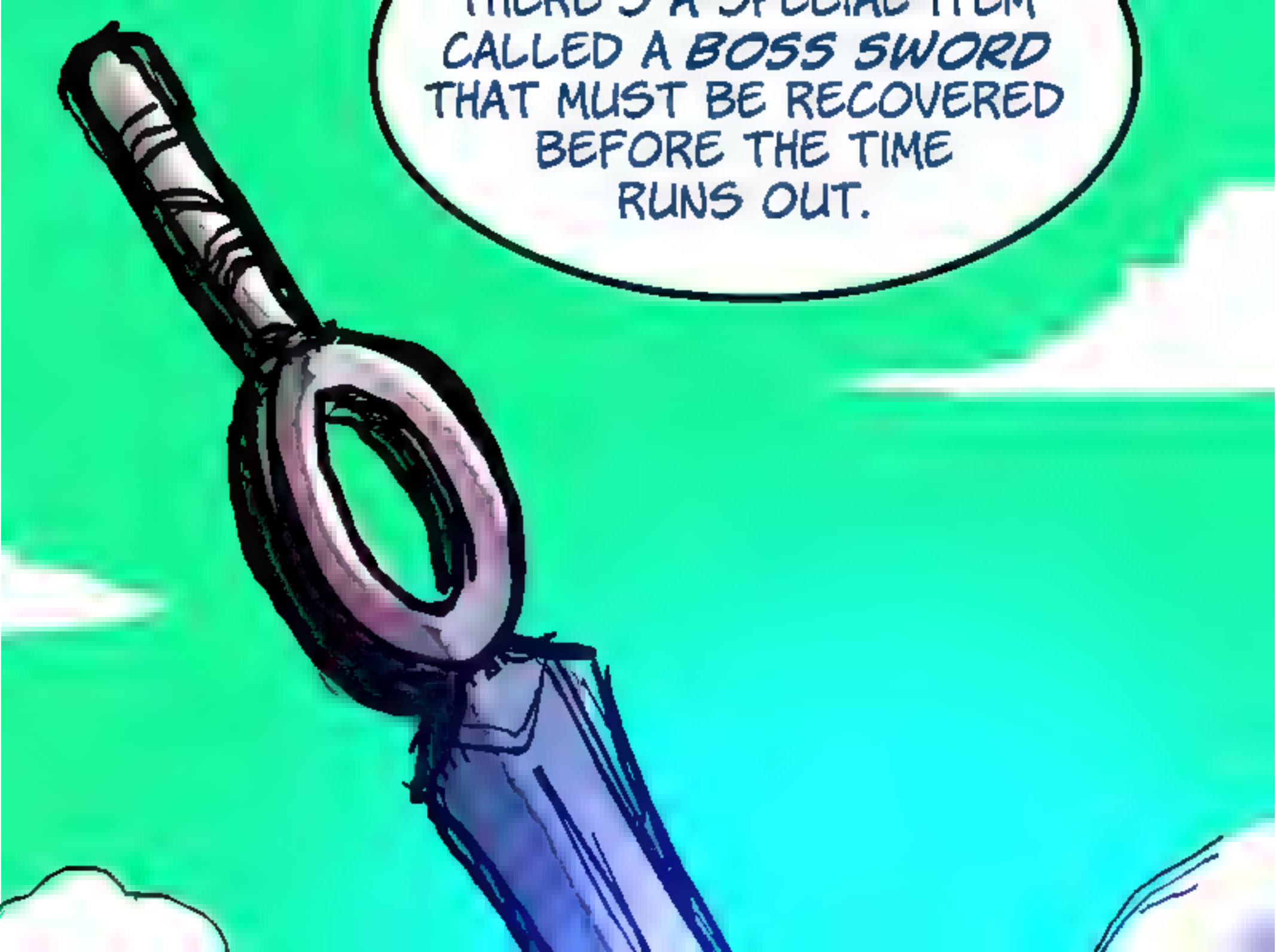
"I THINK THEREFORE I AM"

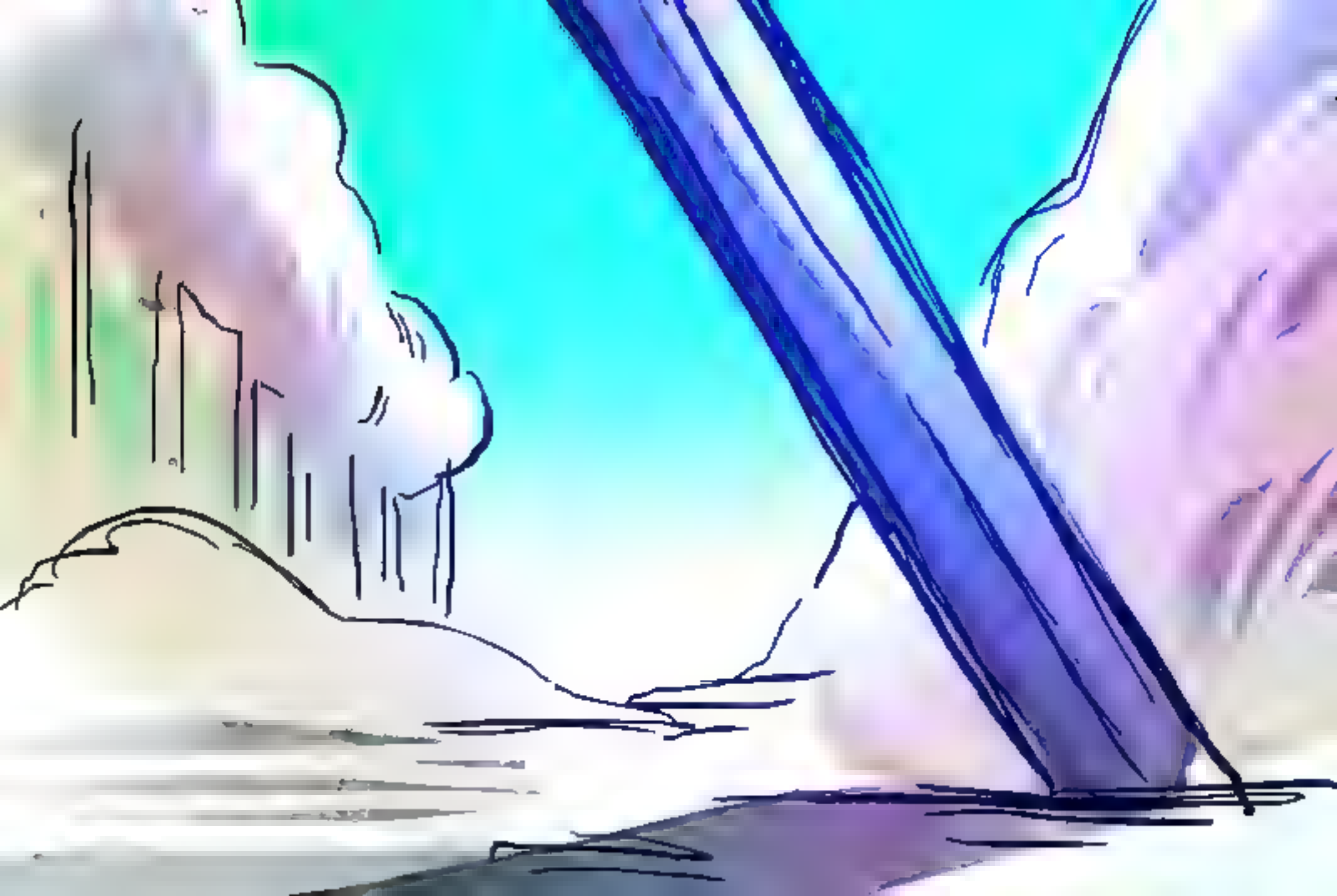
THIS WORLD...




IS
ONE OF MANY
THAT WE CALL
"REALMS"

IN EACH REALM,
THERE'S A SPECIAL ITEM


THERE'S A SPECIAL ITEM
CALLED A BOSS SWORD
THAT MUST BE RECOVERED
BEFORE THE TIME
RUNS OUT.

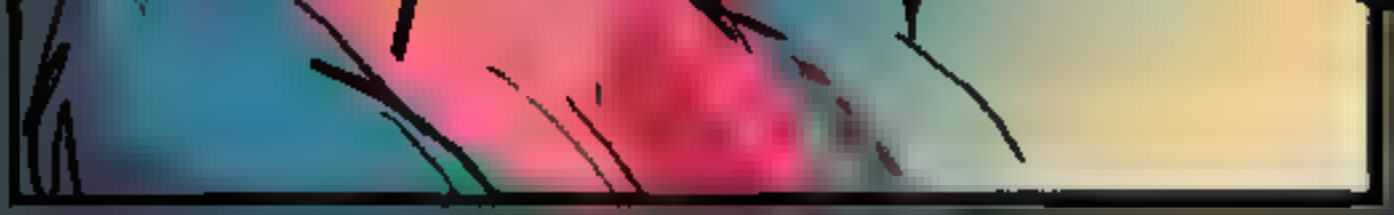


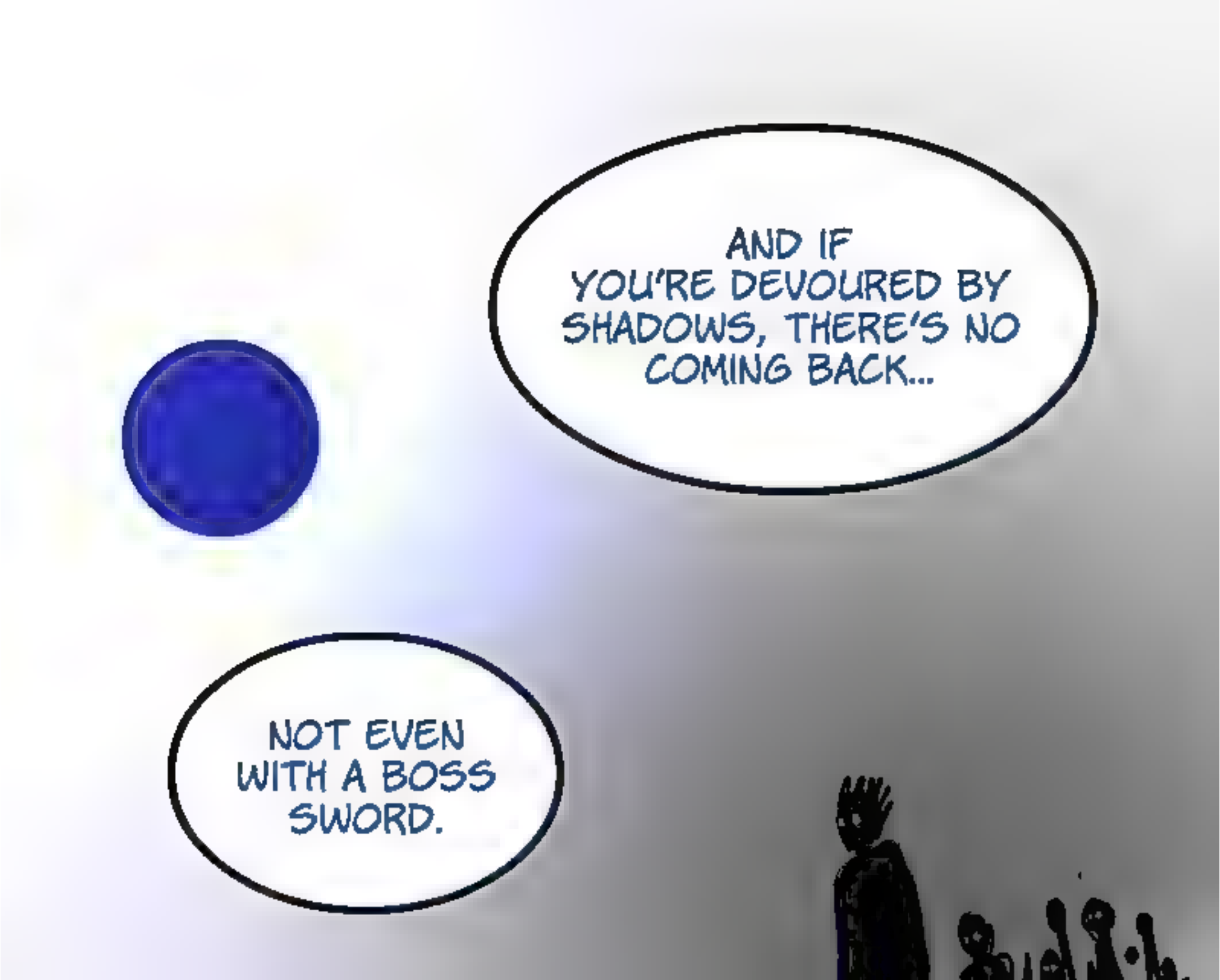
IF YOU RUN OUT OF TIME, THE REALM IS OVERTAKEN WITH DARKNESS...

AND AN
ARMY OF SHADOWS
DEVOURS EVERYONE
AND EVERYTHING...

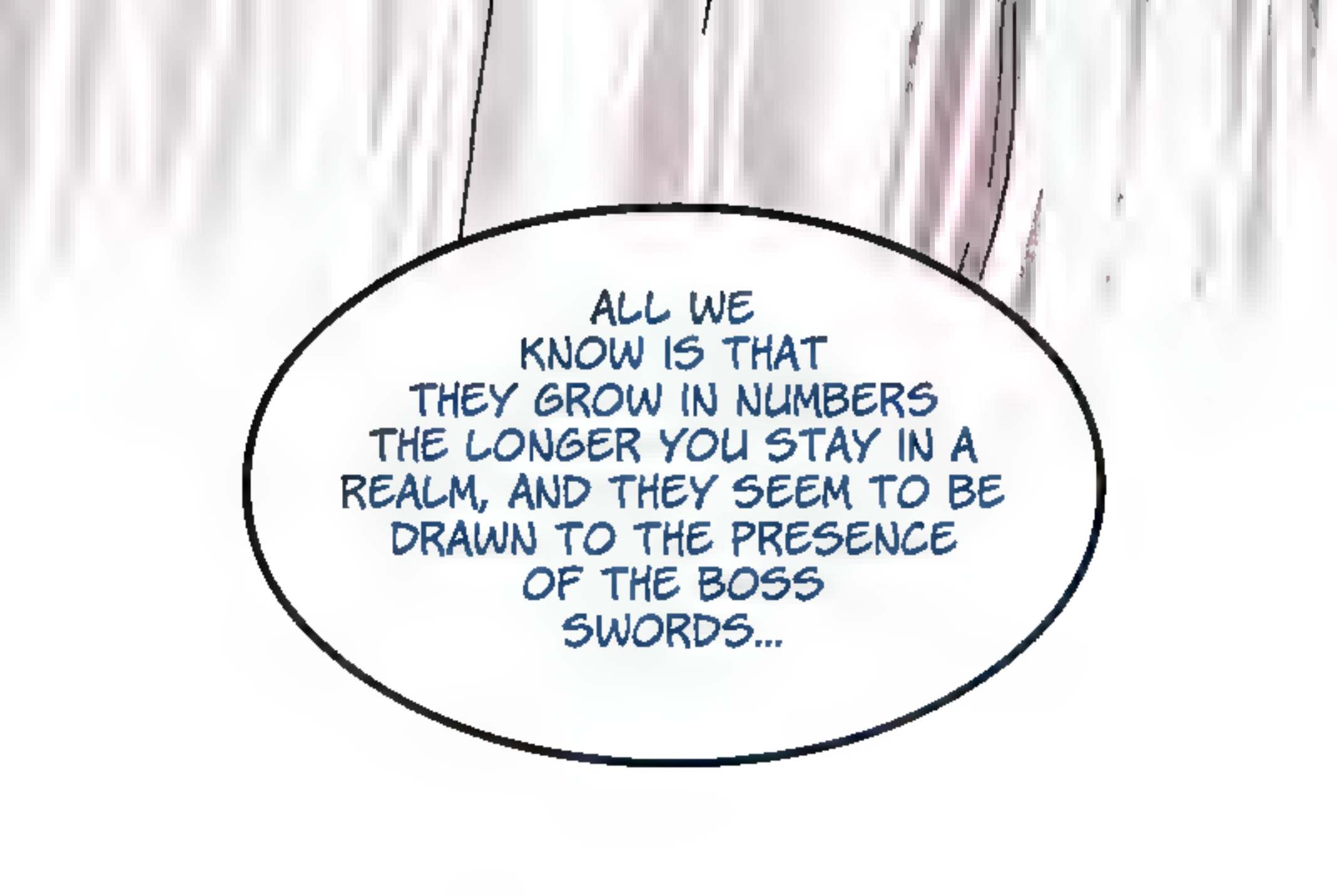
SHADOWS? YOU MEAN LIKE THAT THING THAT ATTACKED US?
THERE ARE MORE OF THEM?!

THOUSANDS.



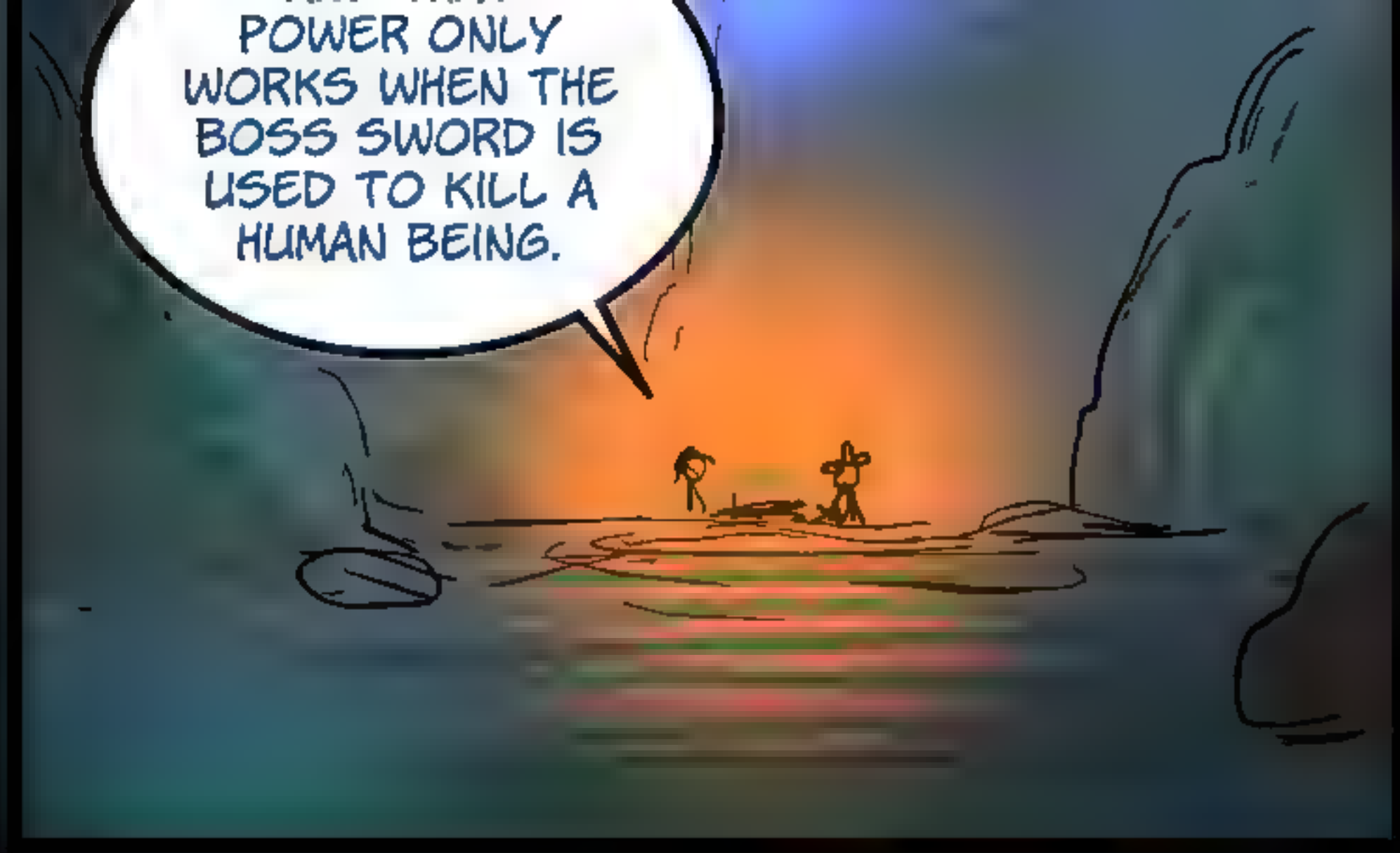

AND IF YOU'RE DEVOURED BY SHADOWS, THERE'S NO COMING BACK...
NOT EVEN WITH A BOSS SWORD.

...
WHAT ARE THEY?
NOBODY KNOWS MUCH ABOUT THEM... WHERE THEY COME FROM, WHAT THEY WANT...


ALL WE
KNOW IS THAT
THEY GROW IN NUMBERS
THE LONGER YOU STAY IN A
REALM, AND THEY SEEM TO BE
DRAWN TO THE PRESENCE
OF THE BOSS
SWORDS...

IRONICALLY, THE BOSS SWORDS SEEM TO BE THE ONLY THINGS THAT CAN "HURT" THEM...
THOUGH NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN ABLE TO KILL A SHADOW SOLDIER...

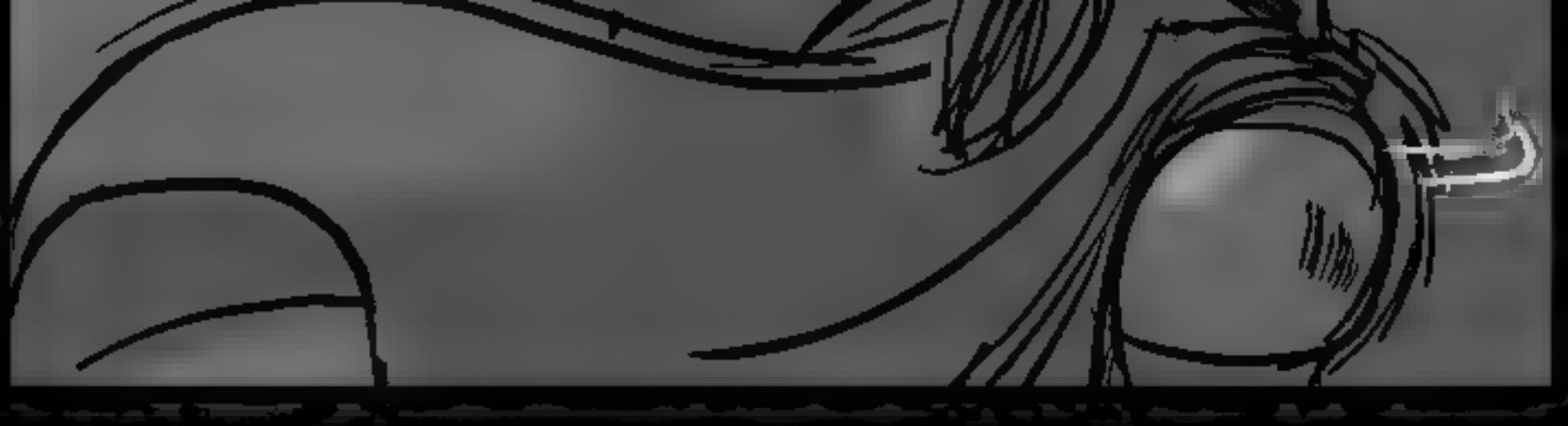
I THOUGHT YOU SAID THE BOSS SWORDS BRING THINGS BACK TO LIFE...
NO, IT'S NOT REVIVAL. IT'S MORE LIKE A RESET...
AND THAT


POWER ONLY WORKS WHEN THE BOSS SWORD IS USED TO KILL A HUMAN BEING.

LIKE
WHEN I STABBED
YOU.

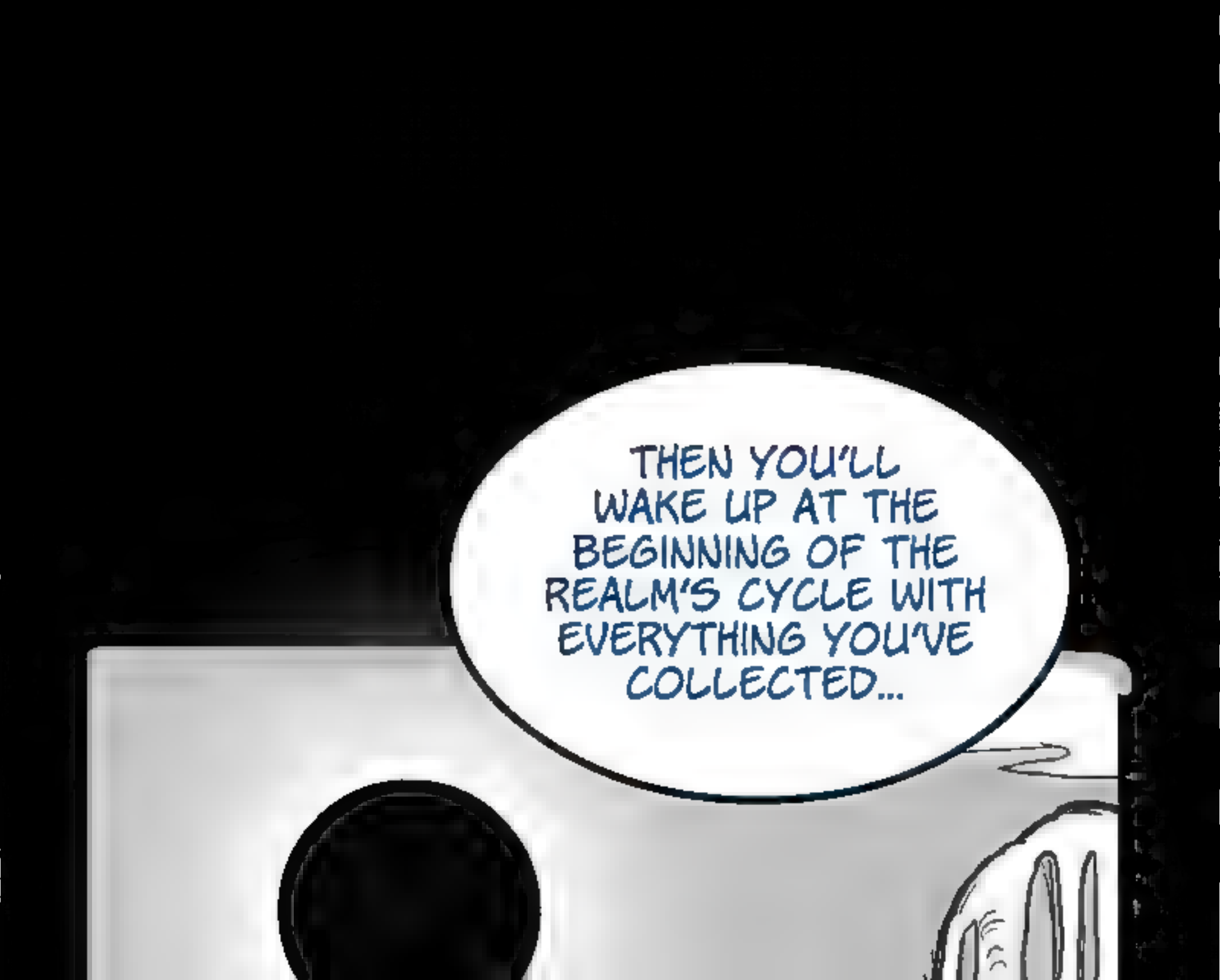
FALL

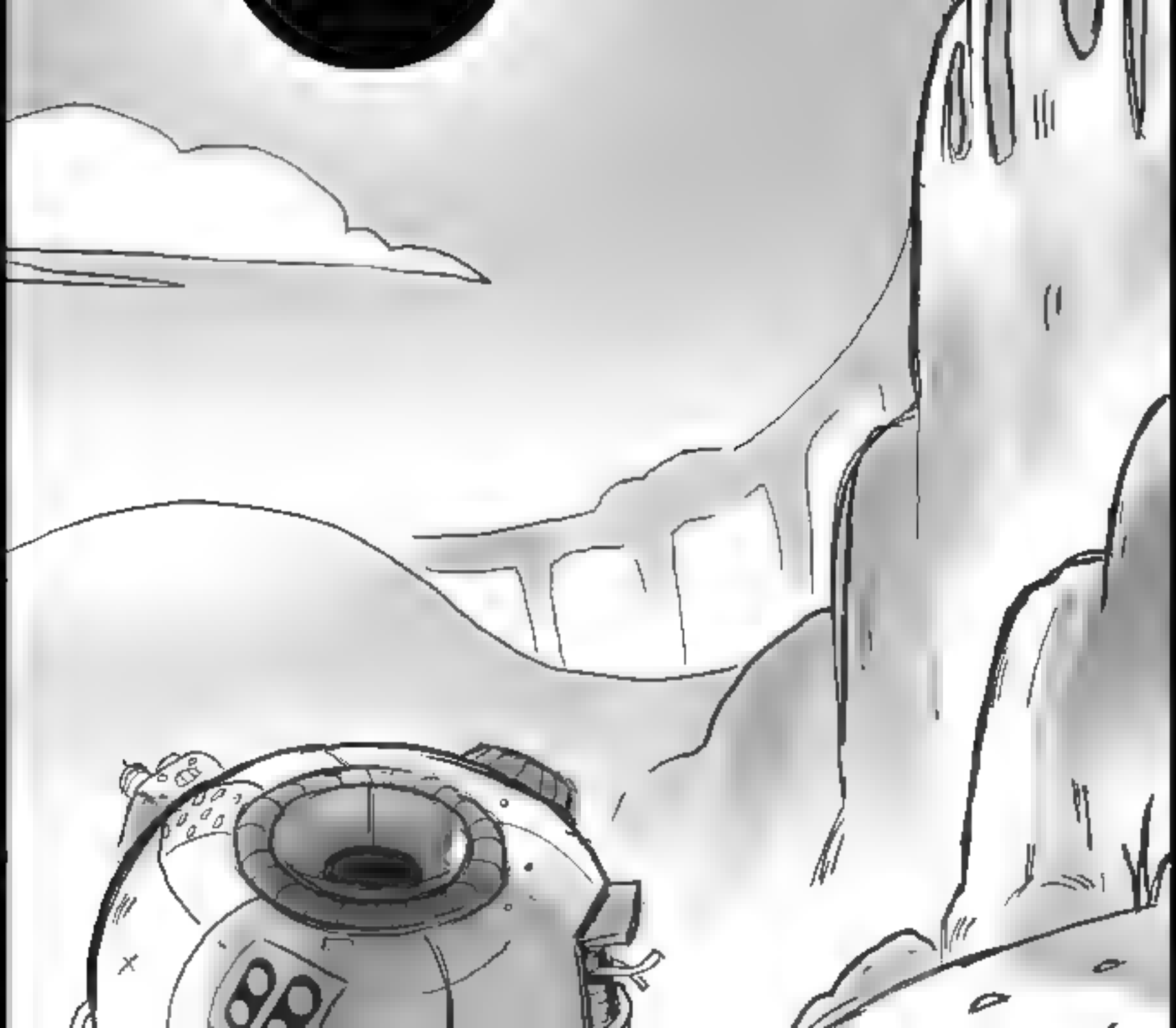
TURN

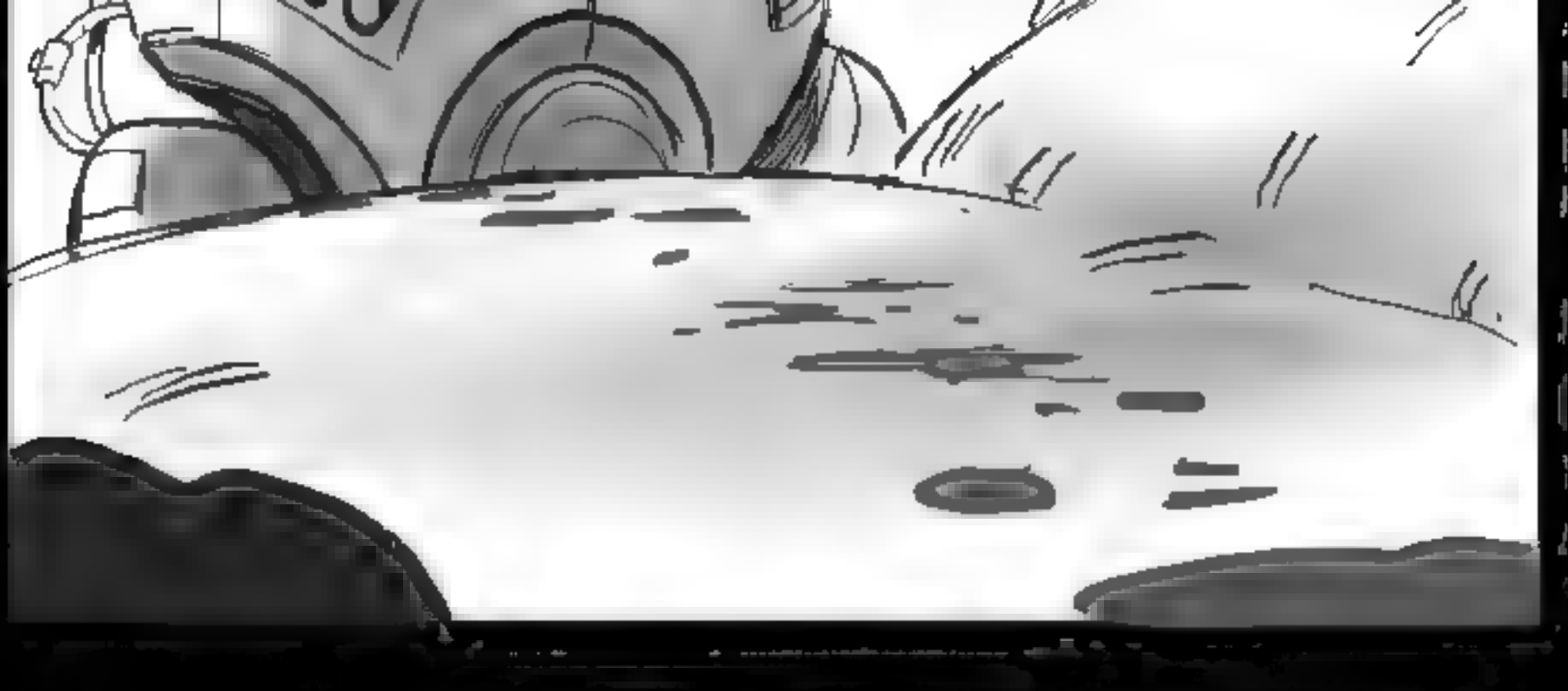


BUT USUALLY, YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT YOURSELF.

STAB!

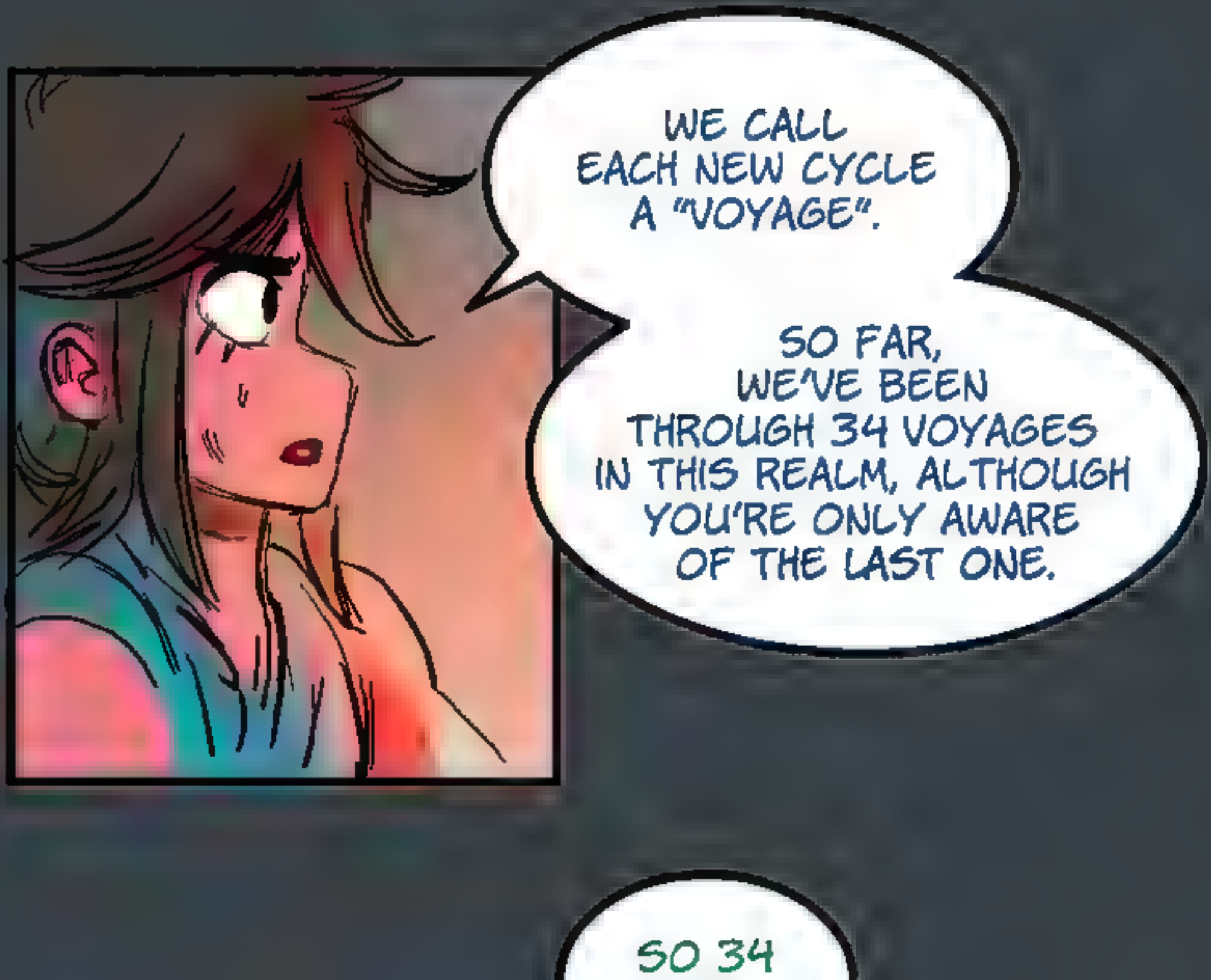

THEN YOU'LL WAKE UP AT THE BEGINNING OF THE REALM'S CYCLE WITH EVERYTHING YOU'VE COLLECTED...





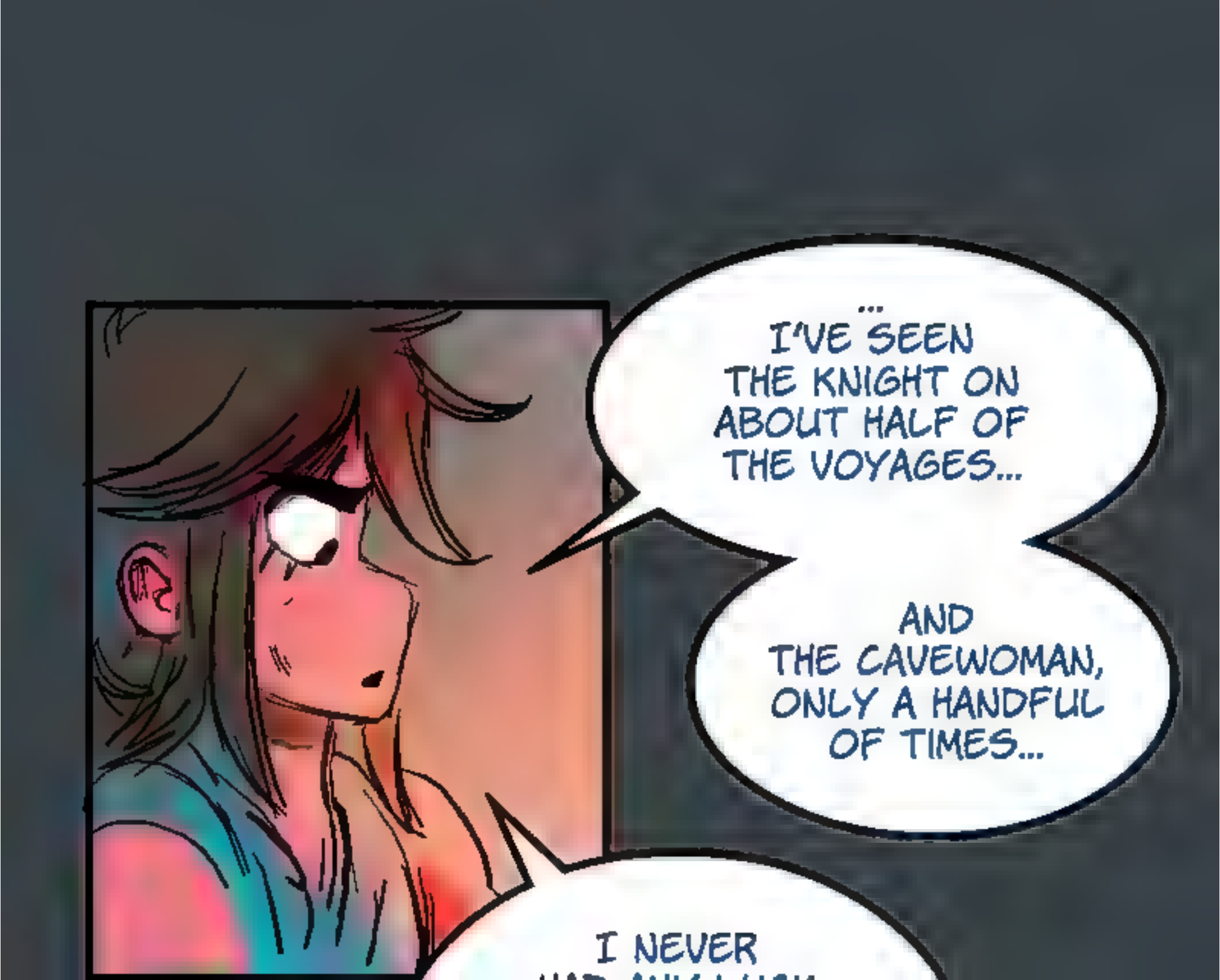
AND OF

COURSE, YOU'LL REMEMBER IT ALL.


WE CALL EACH NEW CYCLE A "VOYAGE".
SO FAR, WE'VE BEEN THROUGH 34 VOYAGES IN THIS REALM, ALTHOUGH YOU'RE ONLY AWARE OF THE LAST ONE.
SO 34

TIMES...
YOU'VE HAD TO...
TAP
TAP
...YES.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE MET ON THESE "VOYAGES?"

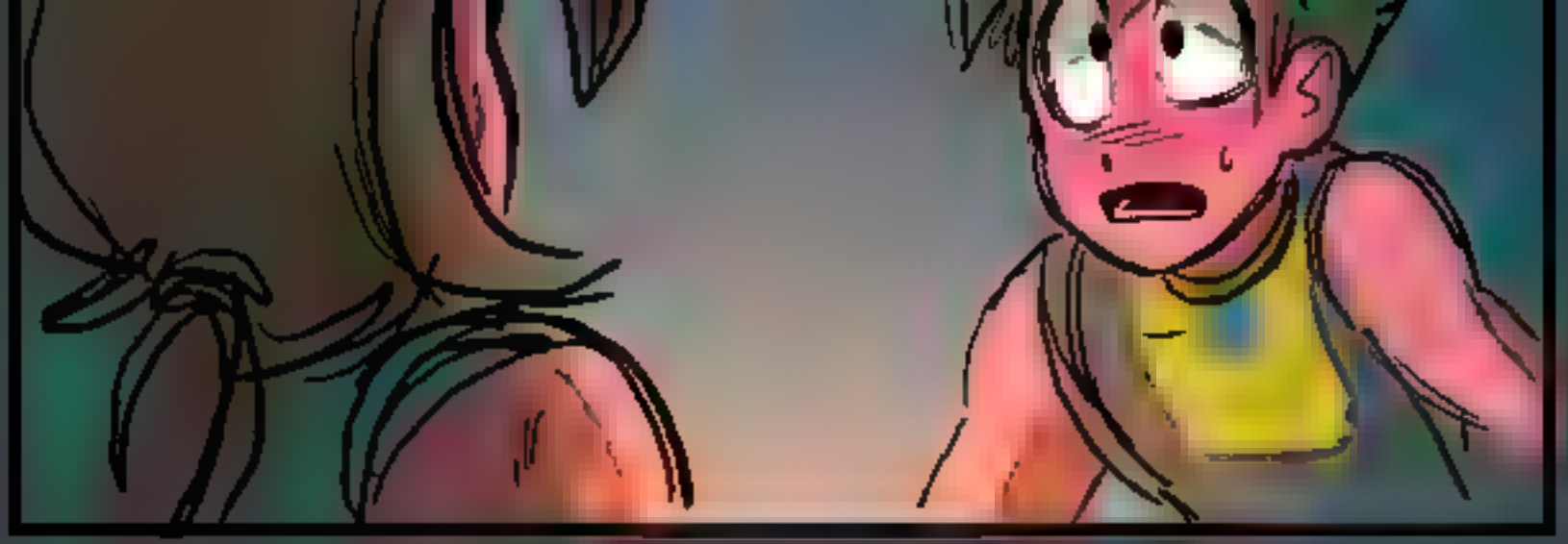

...
I'VE SEEN THE KNIGHT ON ABOUT HALF OF THE VOYAGES...
AND THE CAVEWOMAN, ONLY A HANDFUL OF TIMES...
I NEVER

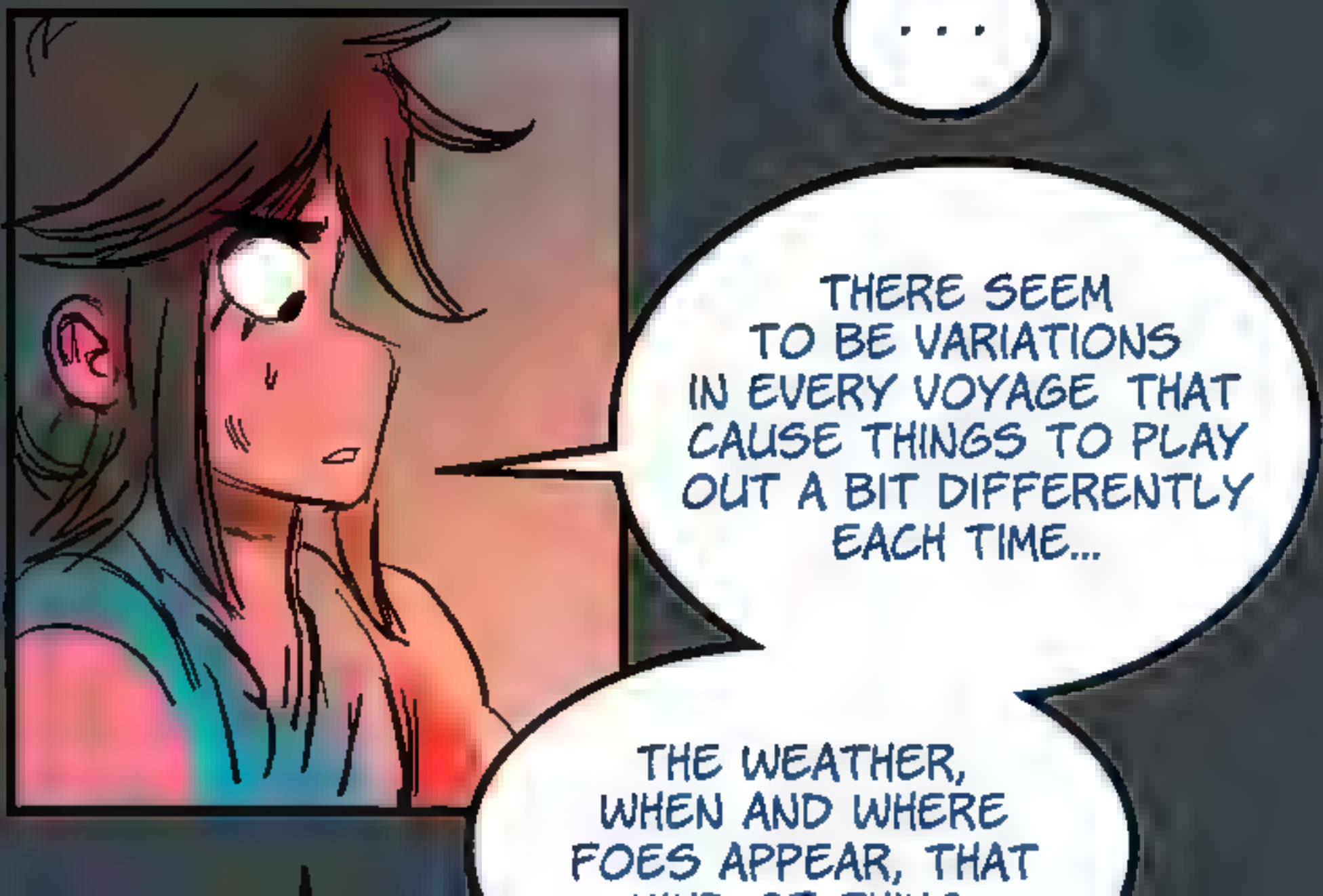
HAD ANY LUCK CONVINCING EITHER OF THEM TO JOIN ME, THOUGH, UNTIL YOU SHOWED UP.

AND HOW
MANY TIMES HAVE
I SHOWN UP?

THAT WAS

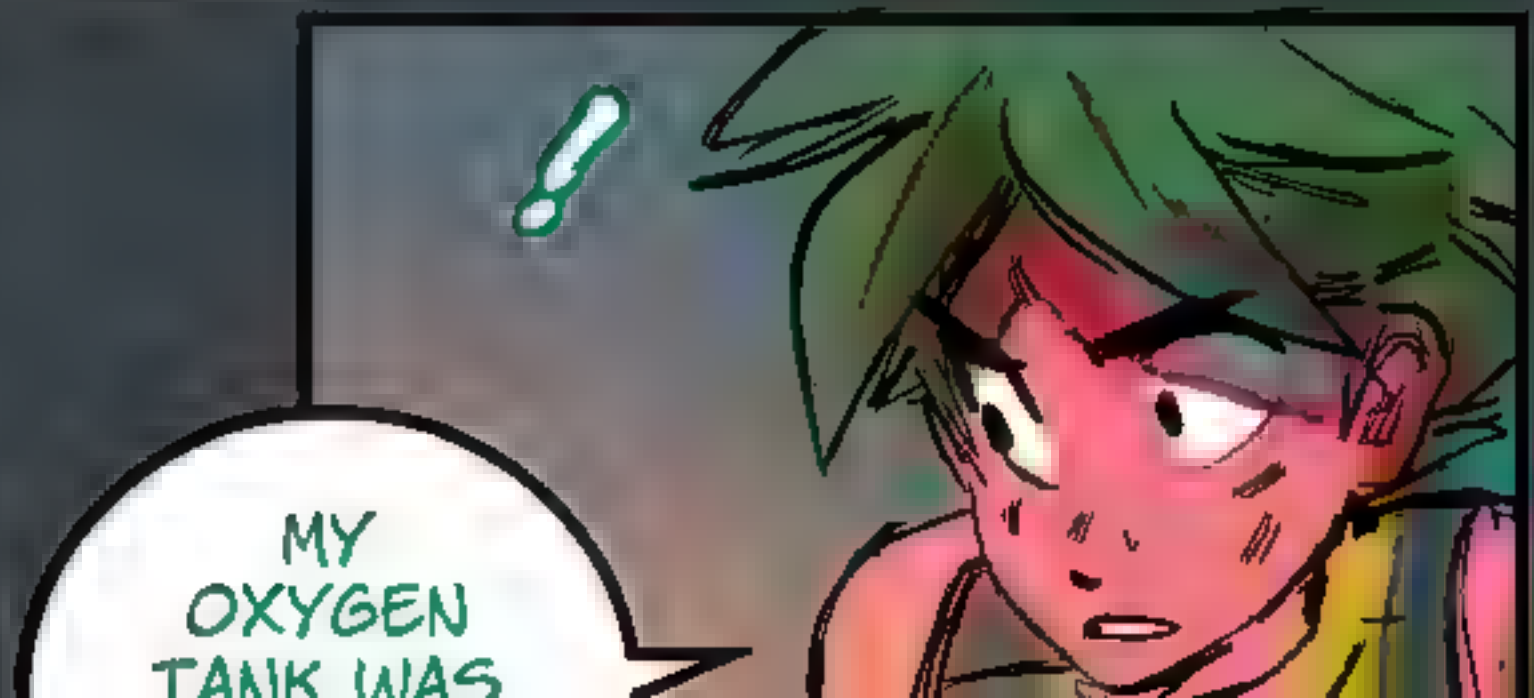
THE FIRST TIME.
ONLY ONCE?! BUT WHY?




. . .
THERE SEEM TO BE VARIATIONS IN EVERY VOYAGE THAT CAUSE THINGS TO PLAY OUT A BIT DIFFERENTLY EACH TIME...
THE WEATHER, WHEN AND WHERE FOES APPEAR, THAT

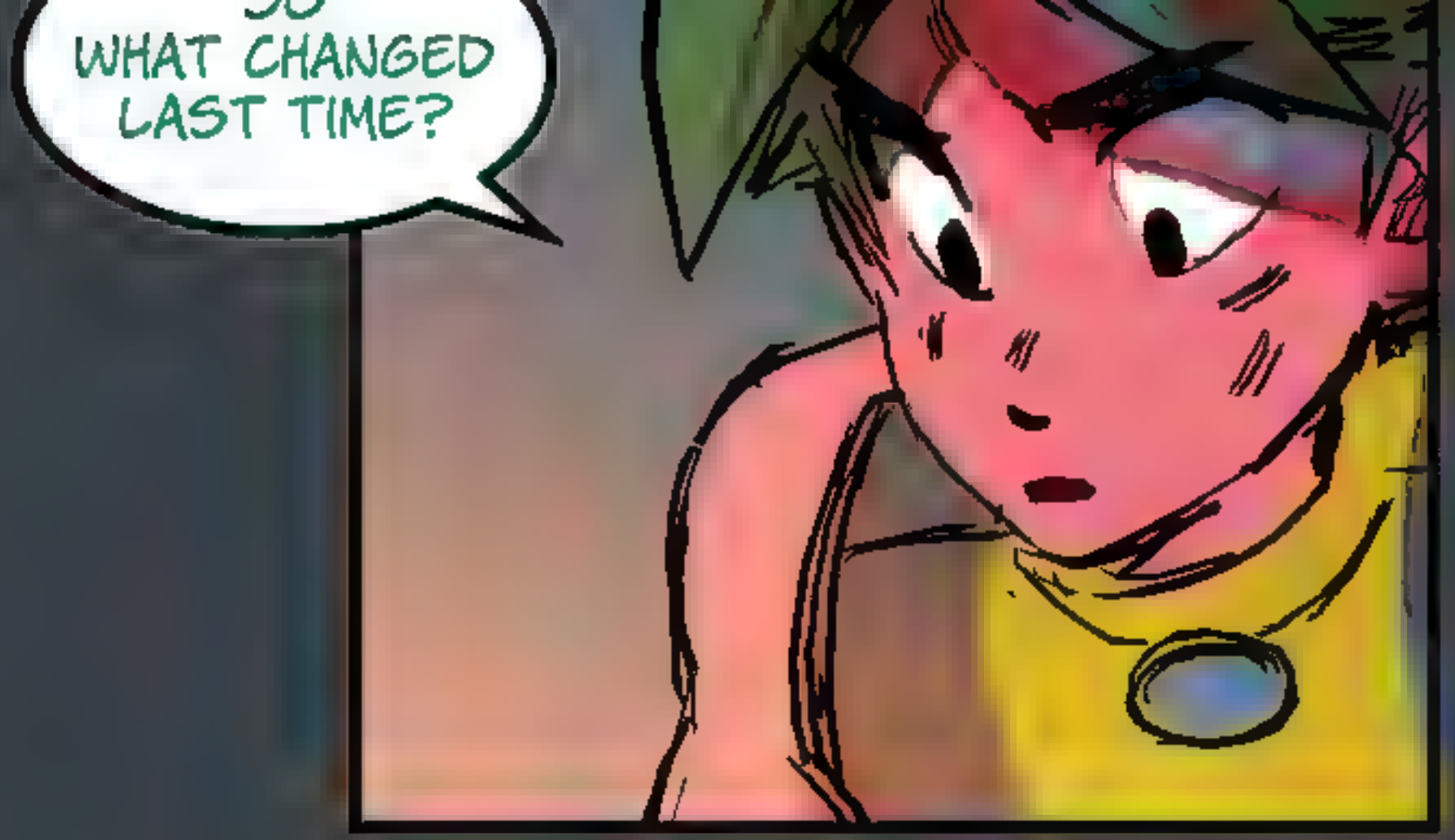
KIND OF THING.

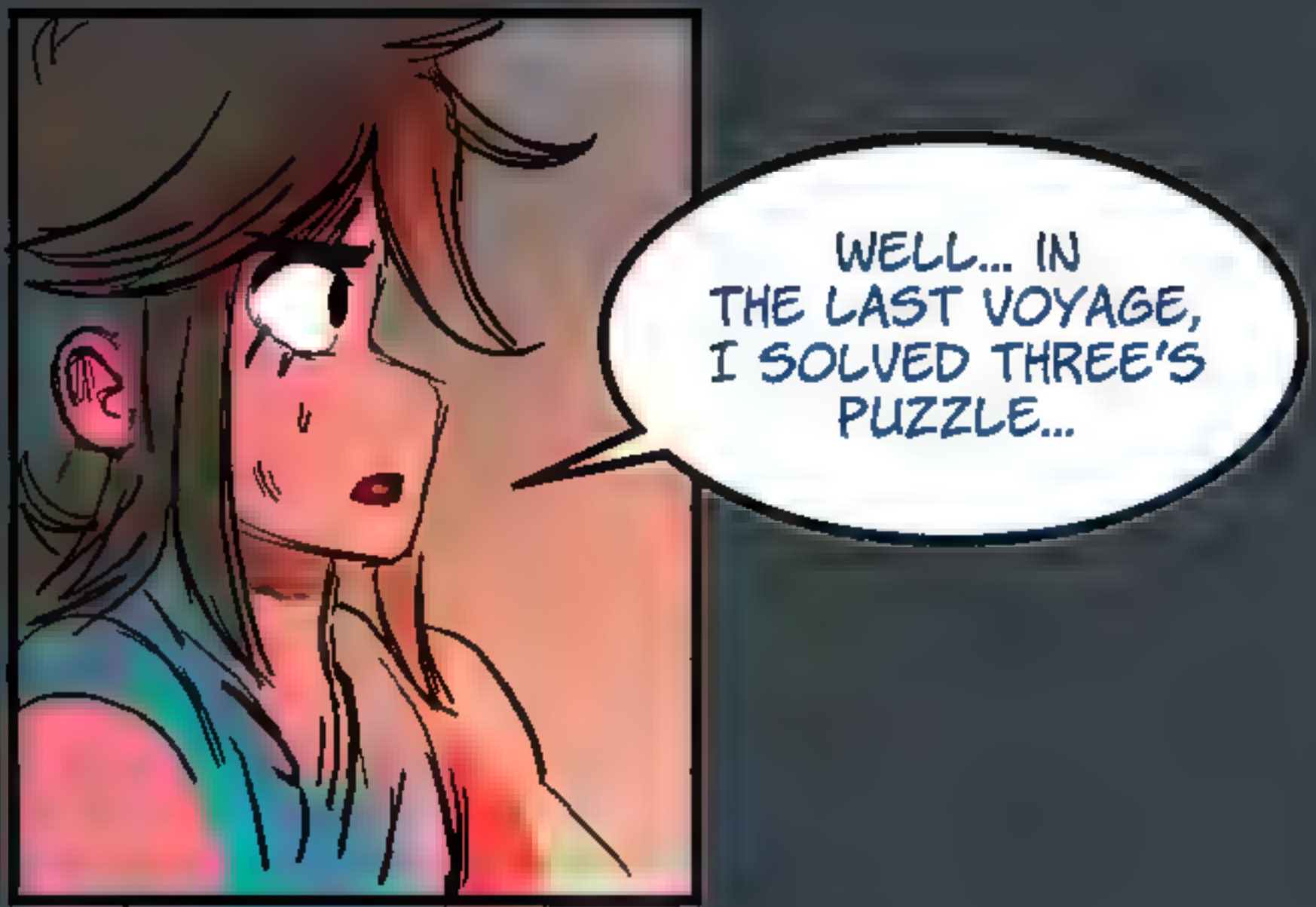
BUT IF I HAD TO GUESS, I'D SAY YOU MUST HAVE DIED EARLY ON IN MOST OF THE VOYAGES.



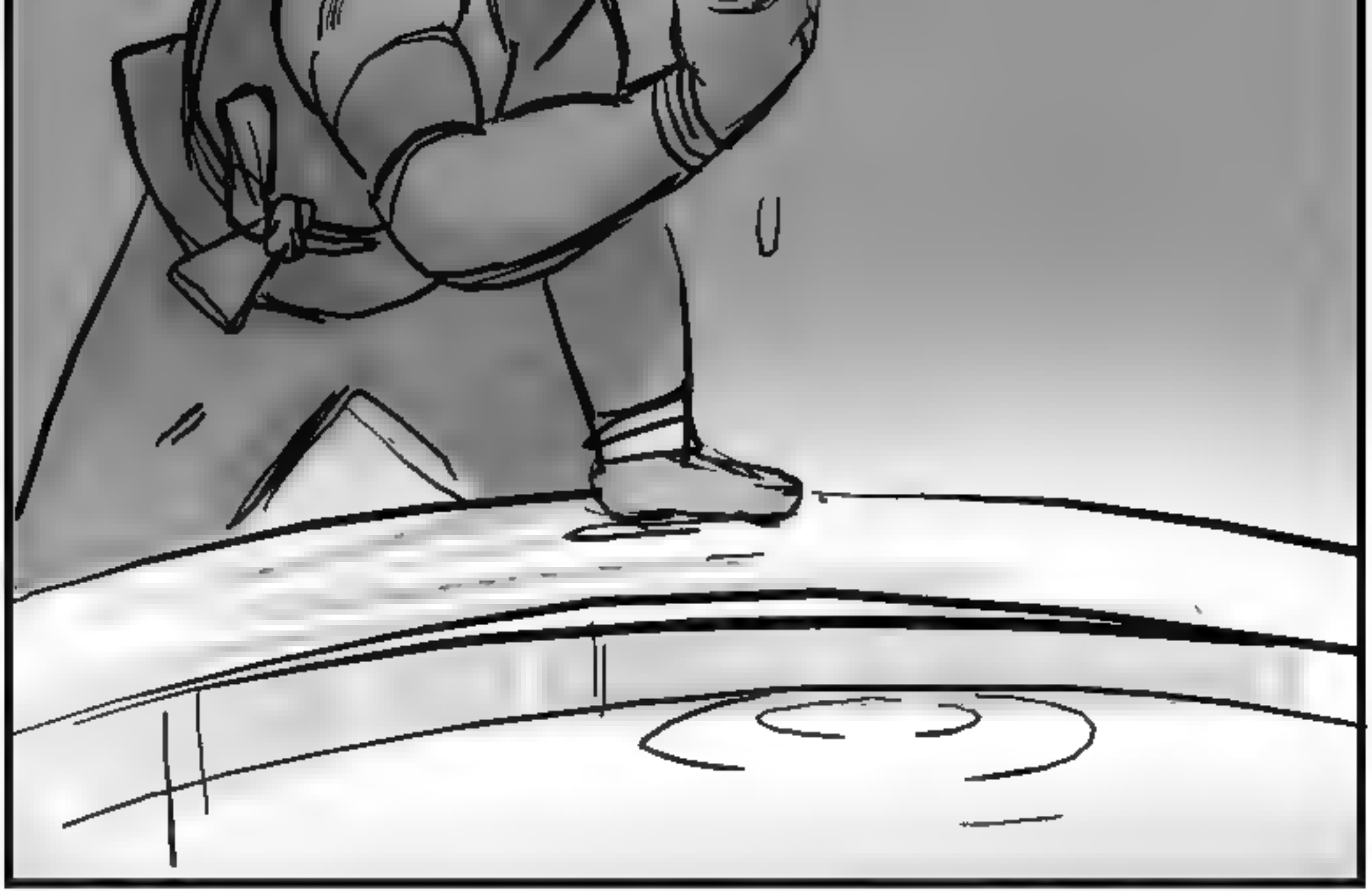
RUNNING
LOW...

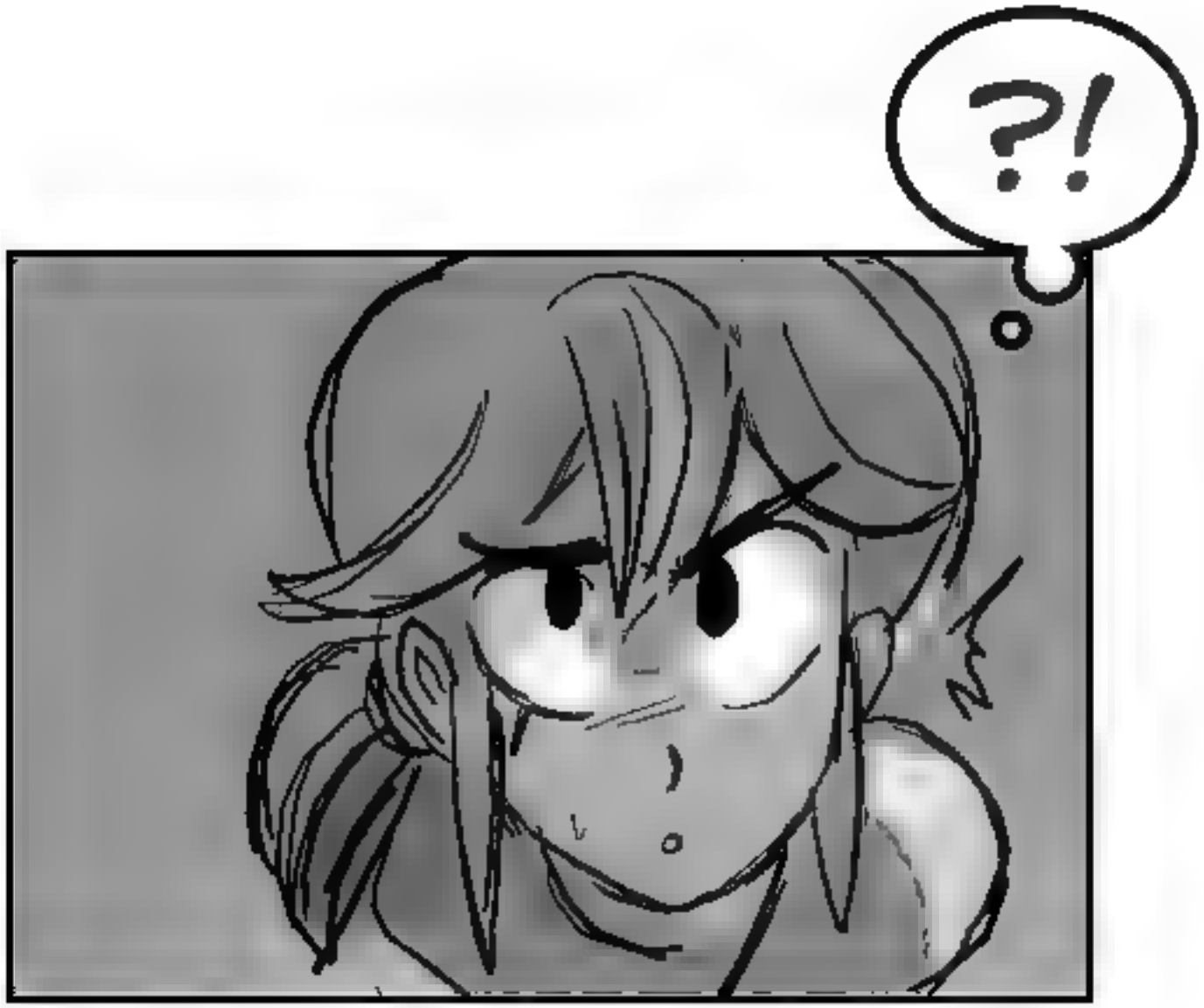
LOW
OXYGEN
3:07 HRS
REMAINING


WHAT CHANGED LAST TIME?


WELL... IN THE LAST VOYAGE, I SOLVED THREE'S PUZZLE...

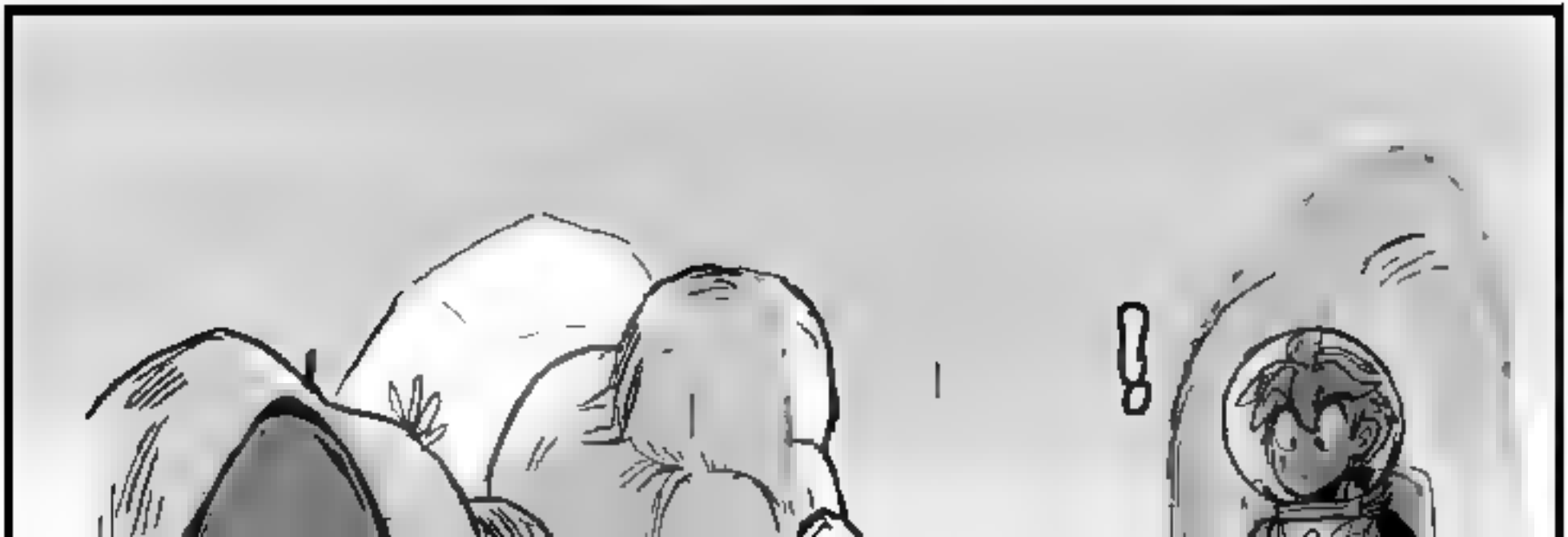
FOUND IT!



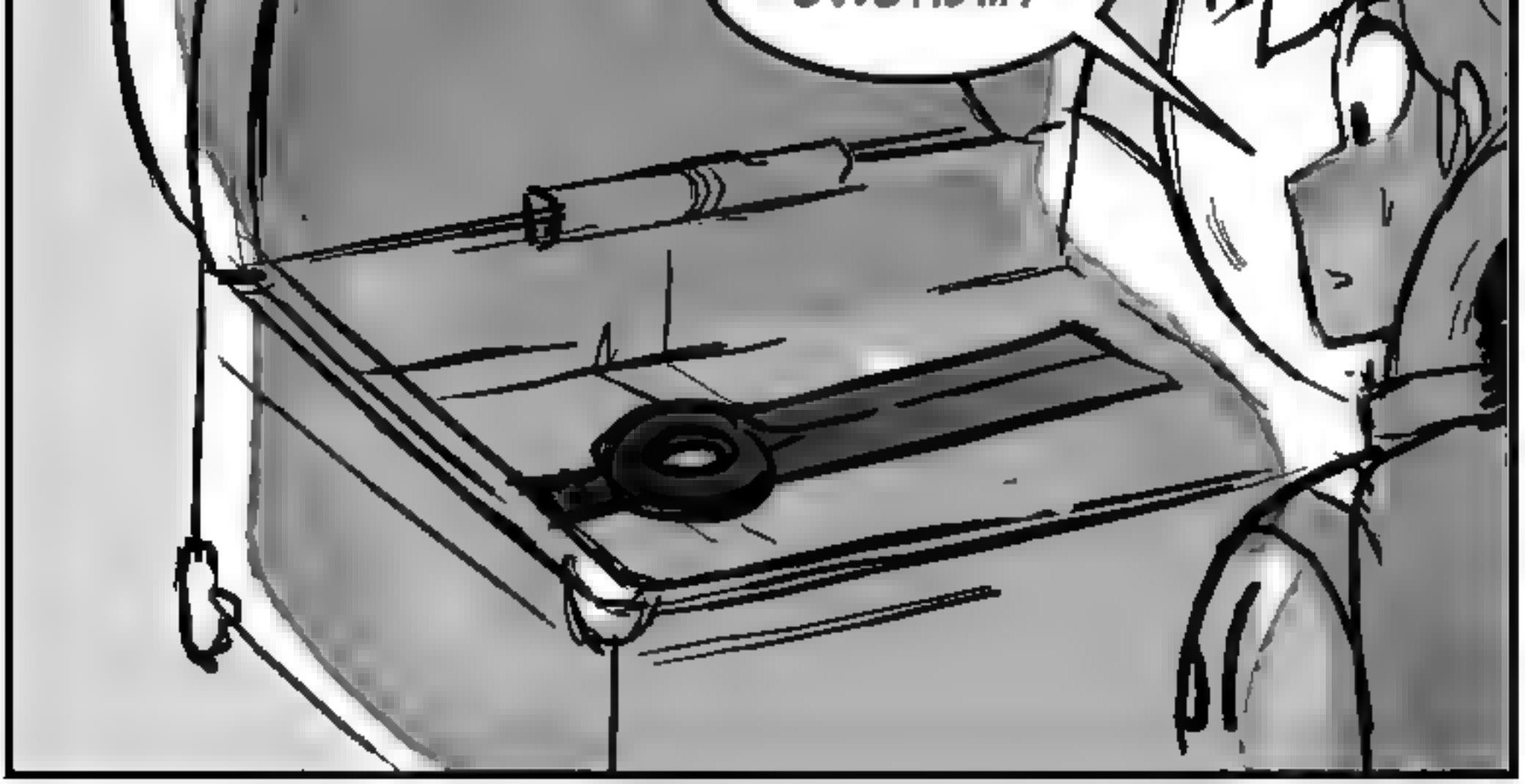


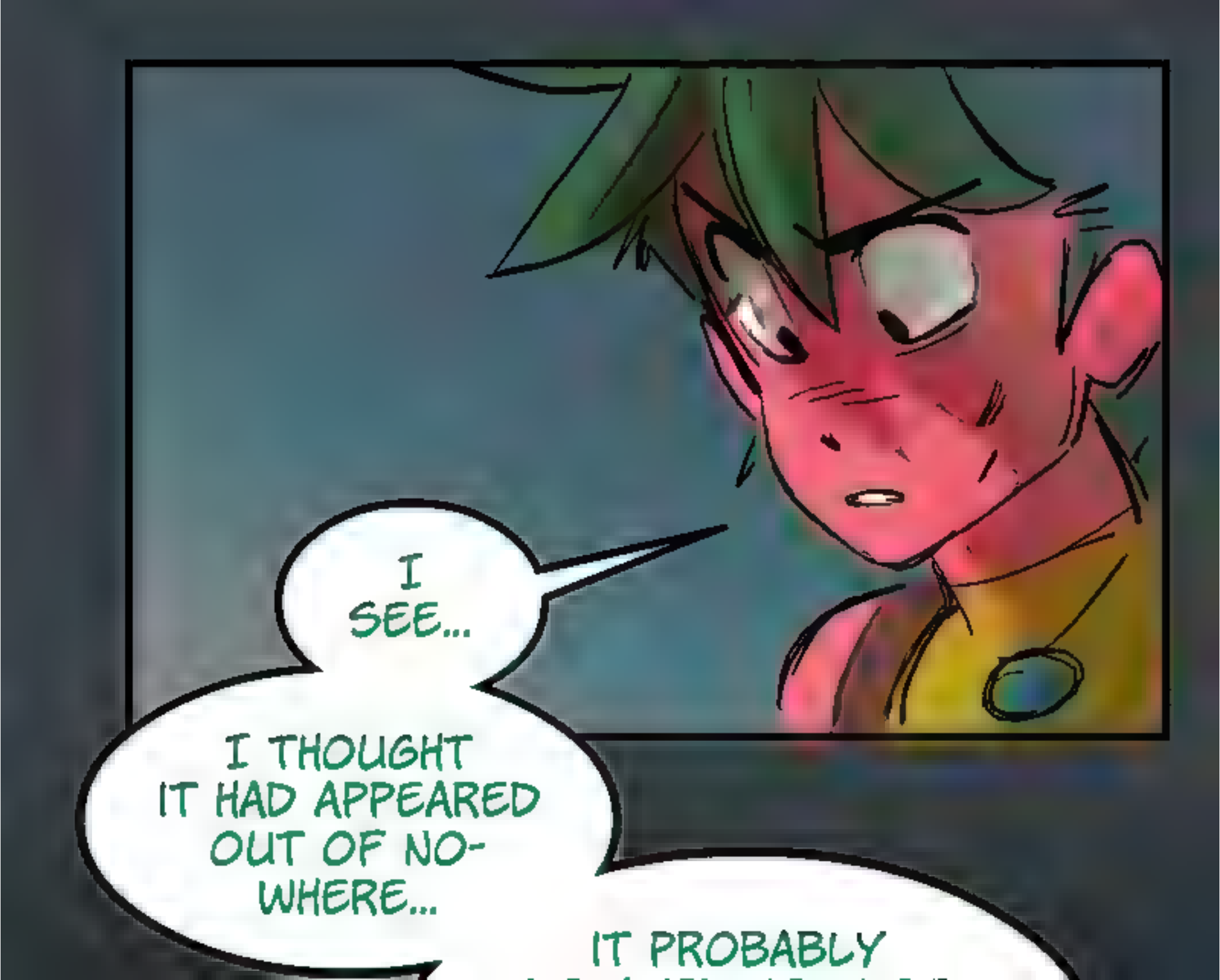
HUH?

WHICH CAUSED A CHEST TO APPEAR WHERE YOU WERE.



AND YOU FOUND THE FIRST PIECE OF THE BOSS SWORD.




I SEE...
I THOUGHT IT HAD APPEARED OUT OF NO-WHERE...
IT PROBABLY

DELAYED ME JUST LONG ENOUGH TO BE AT THE CLIFF AT THE SAME TIME AS TORI.

YE THERE, HALT!!!

SEEING HER MADE ME REALIZE THE AIR WASN'T TOXIC WITH JUST MINUTES TO SPARE...

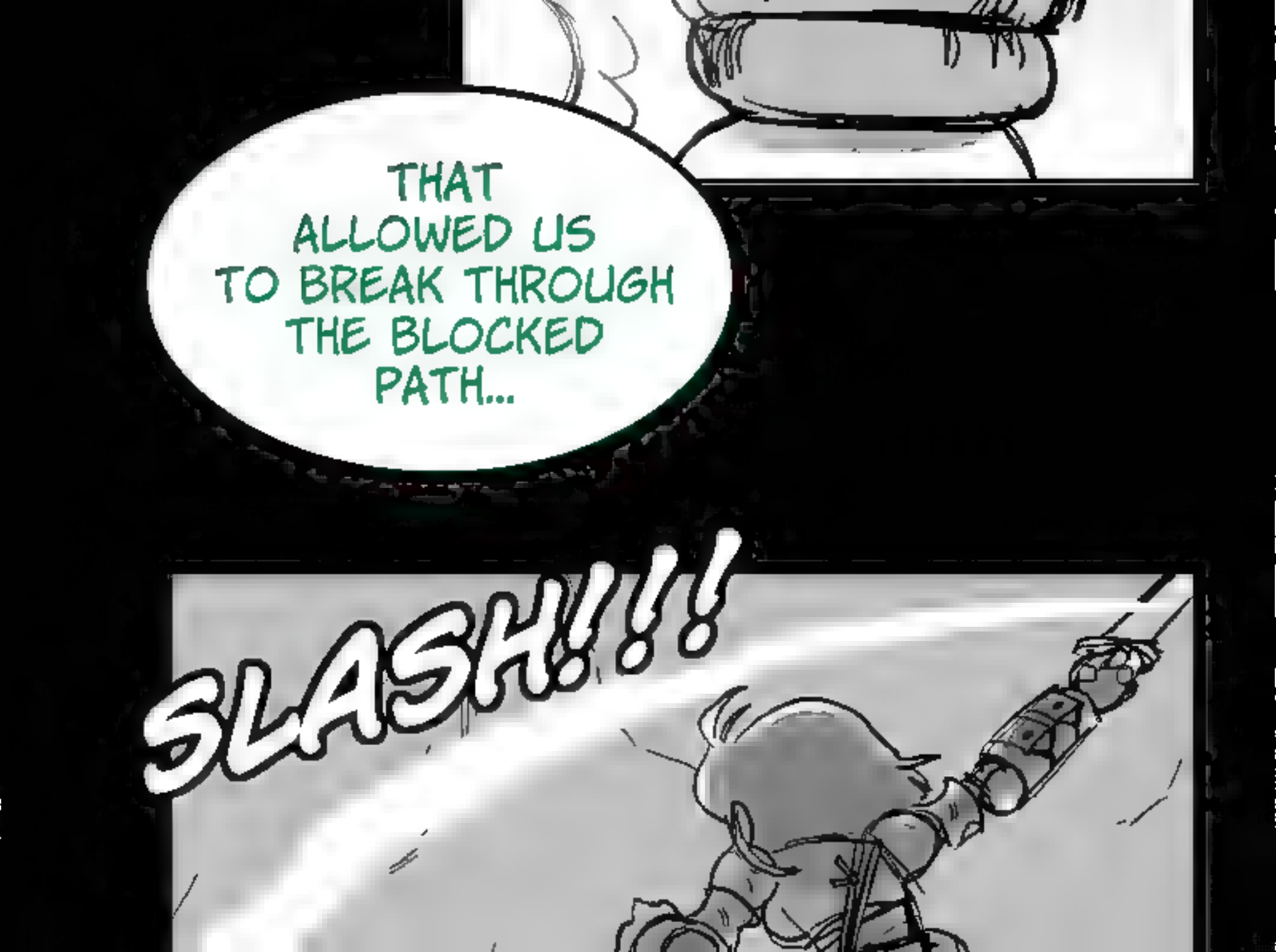
HOLY SHIT!
I'M NOT
GONNA DIE!

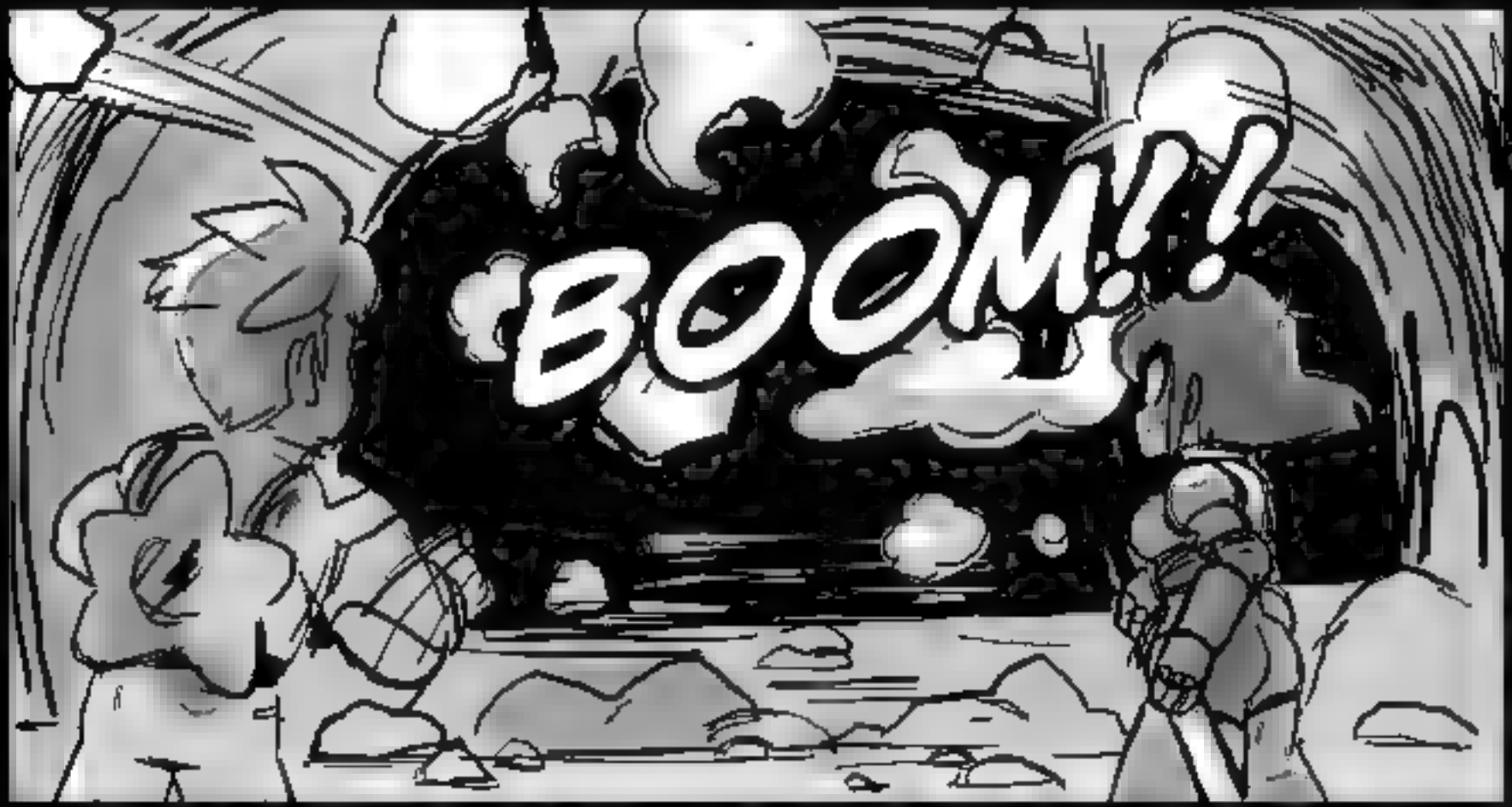
THEN, THREE ATTACKED US BECAUSE I HAD THE SWORD...

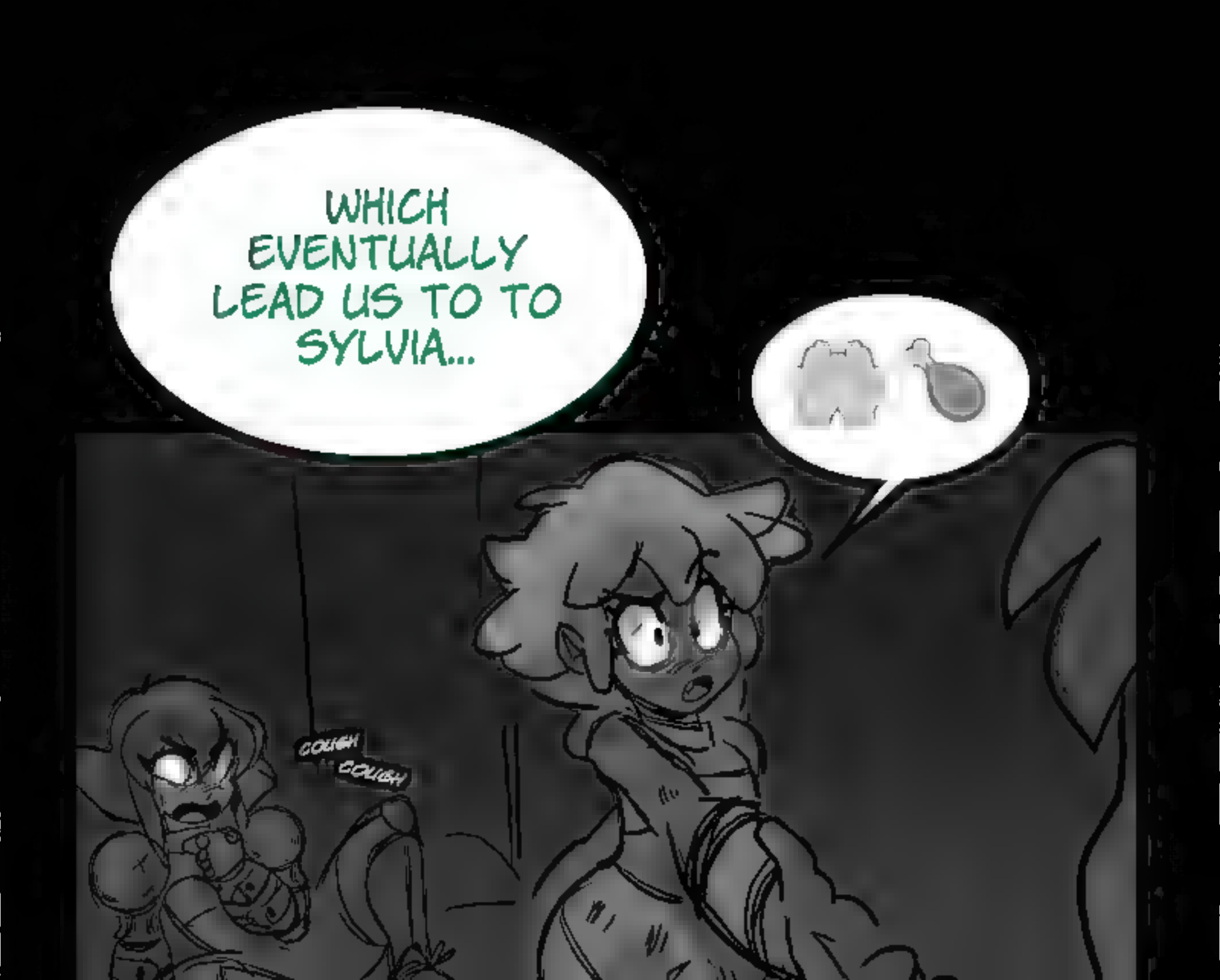
MY TREASURE! YOU STOLE IT!

BUT TORI DEFEATED HIM...

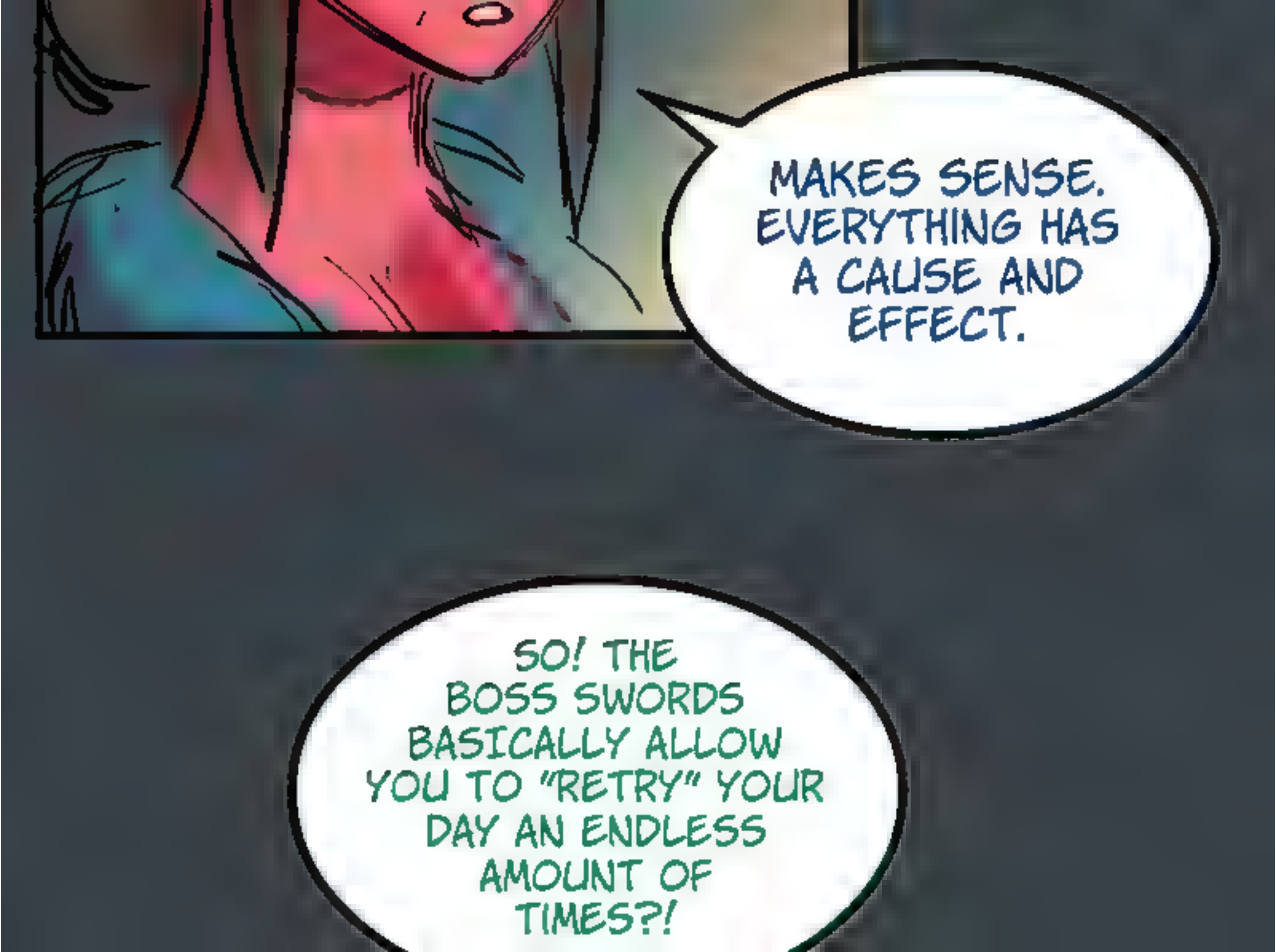
AND SHE INHERITED HIS POWER...

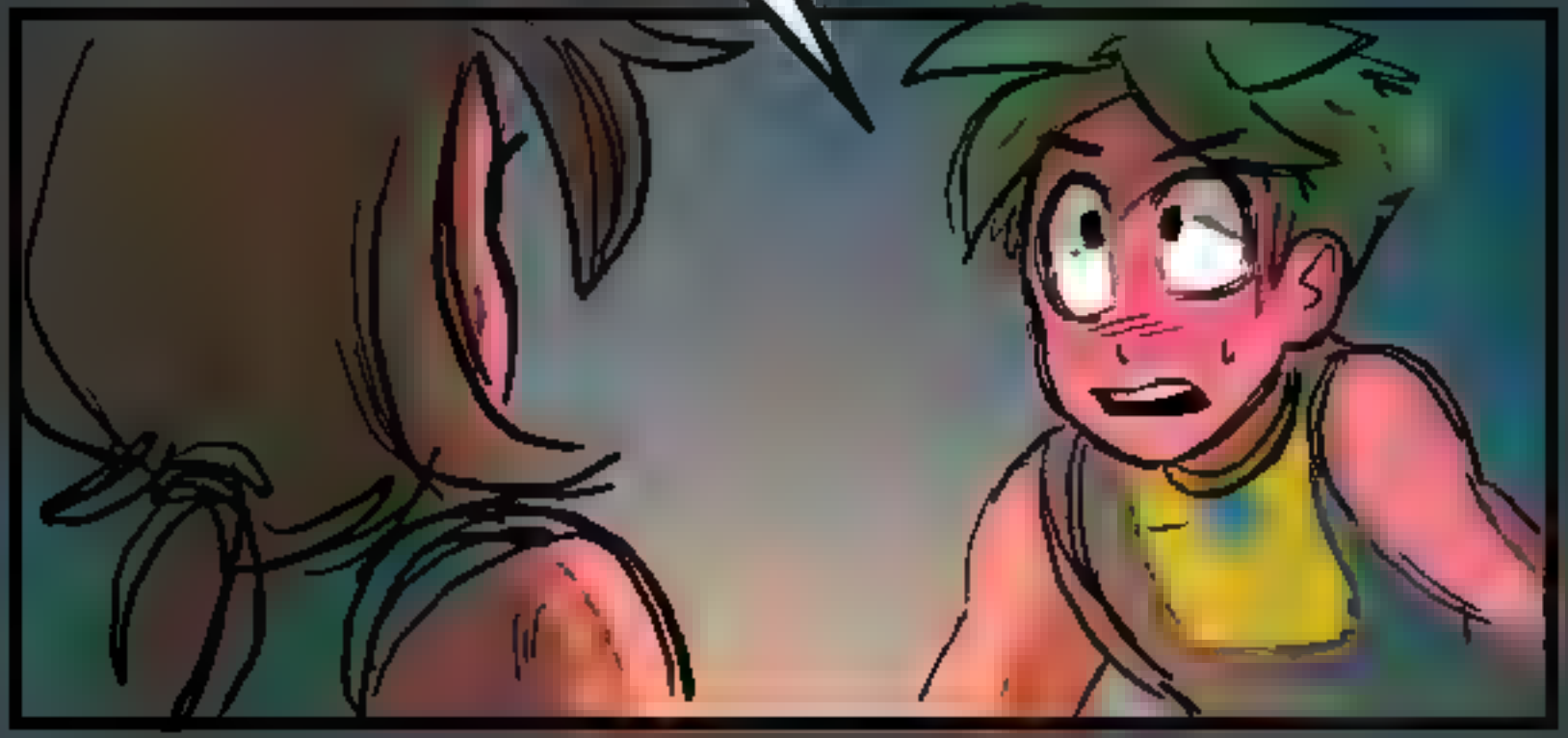

THAT ALLOWED US TO BREAK THROUGH THE BLOCKED PATH...
SLASH!!!


BOOM!!!

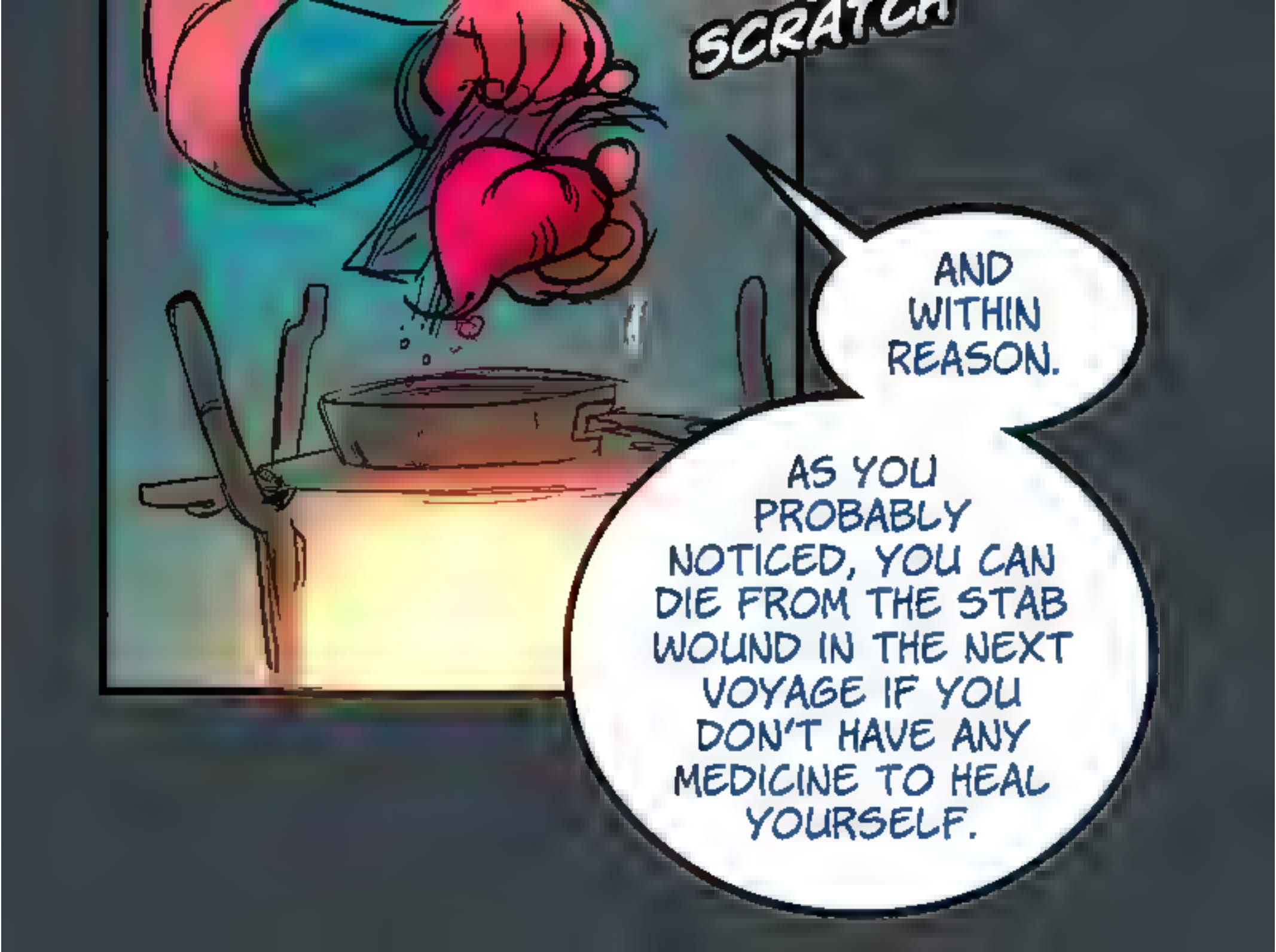

WHICH EVENTUALLY LEAD US TO TO SYLVIA...
COUGH
COUGH

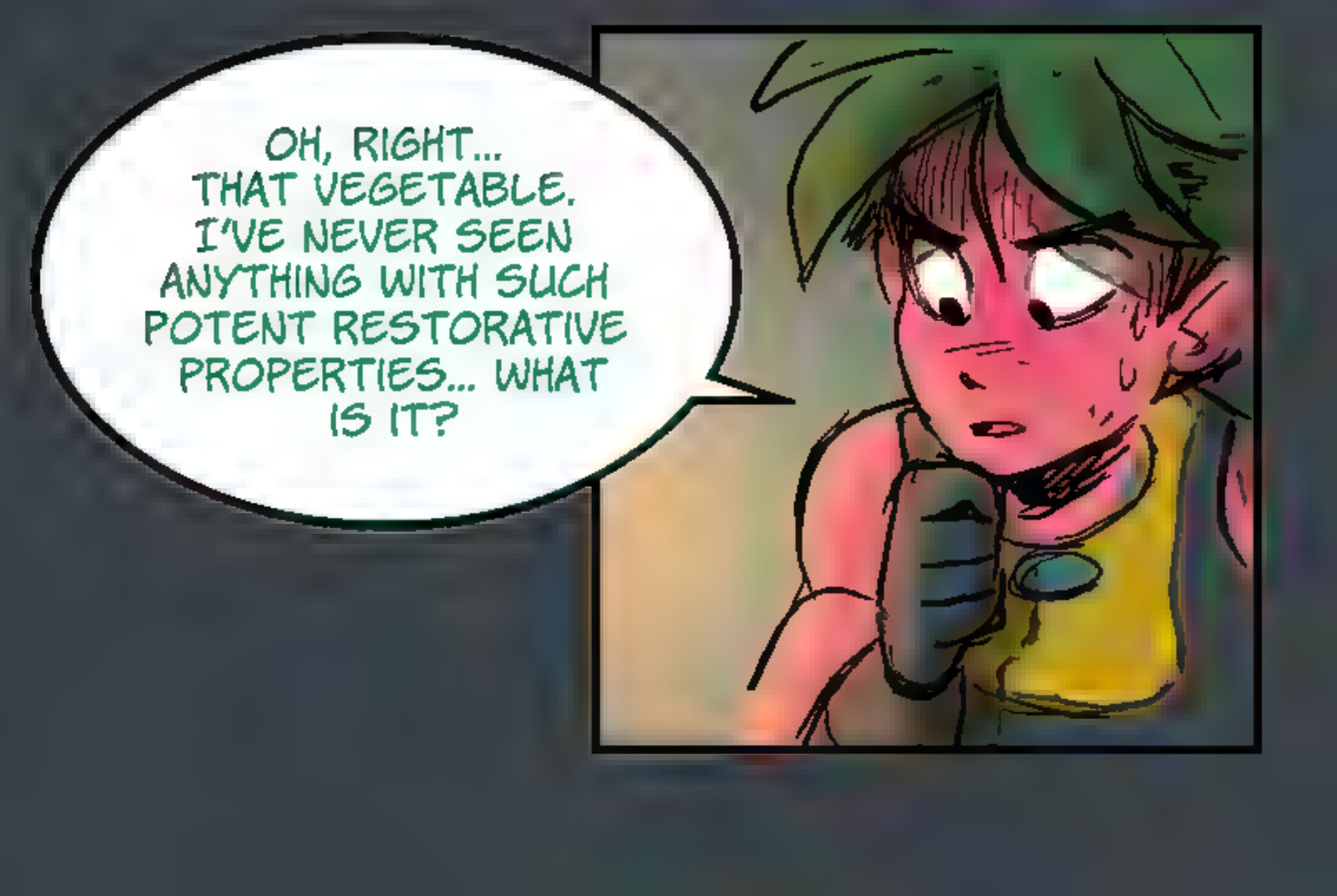
... AND TO YOU.


MAKES SENSE. EVERYTHING HAS A CAUSE AND EFFECT.
SO! THE BOSS SWORDS BASICALLY ALLOW YOU TO "RETRY" YOUR DAY AN ENDLESS AMOUNT OF TIMES?!



IT ALLOWS YOU TO START AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TIMER...

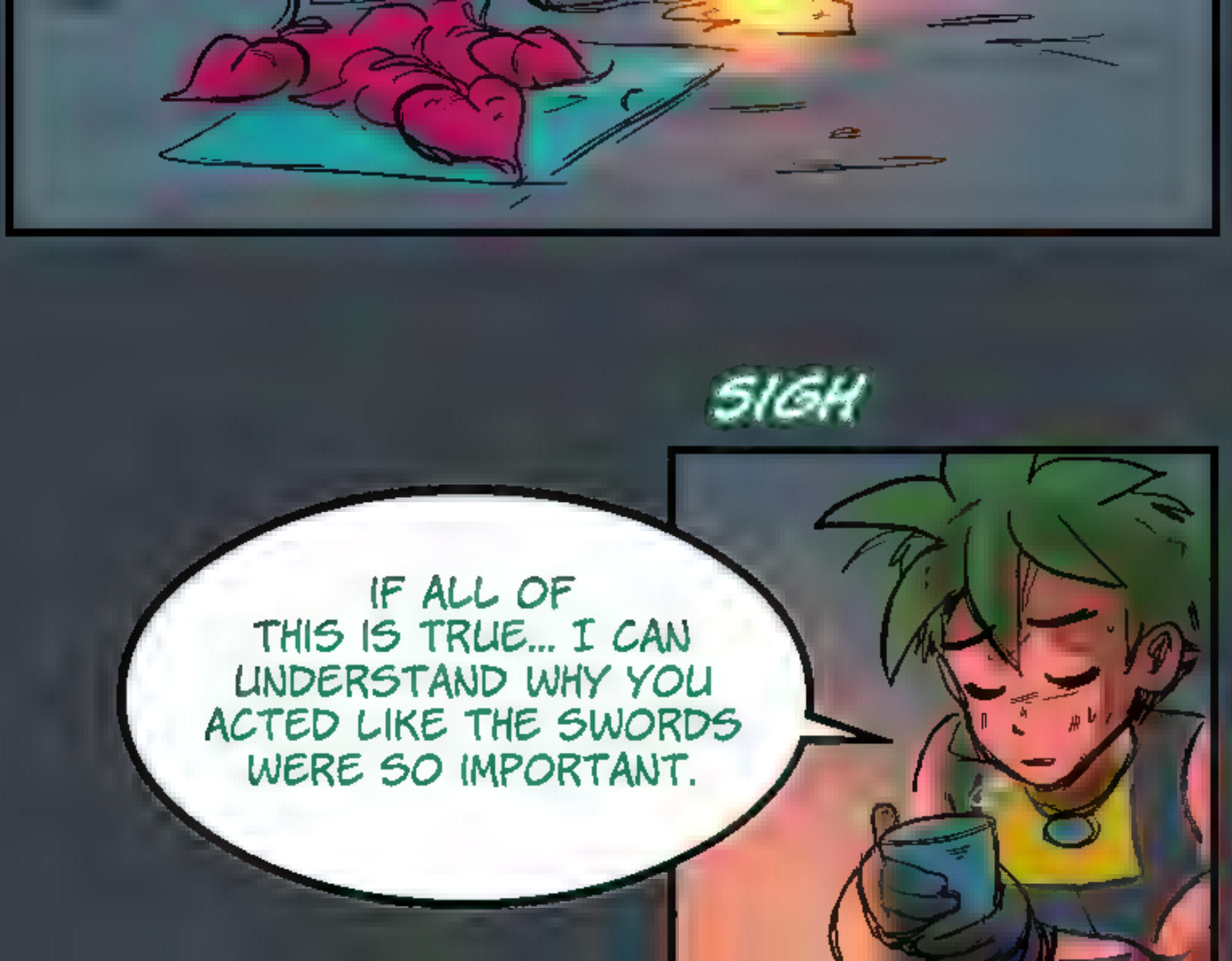

SCRATCH
AND WITHIN REASON.
AS YOU PROBABLY NOTICED, YOU CAN DIE FROM THE STAB WOUND IN THE NEXT VOYAGE IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MEDICINE TO HEAL YOURSELF.

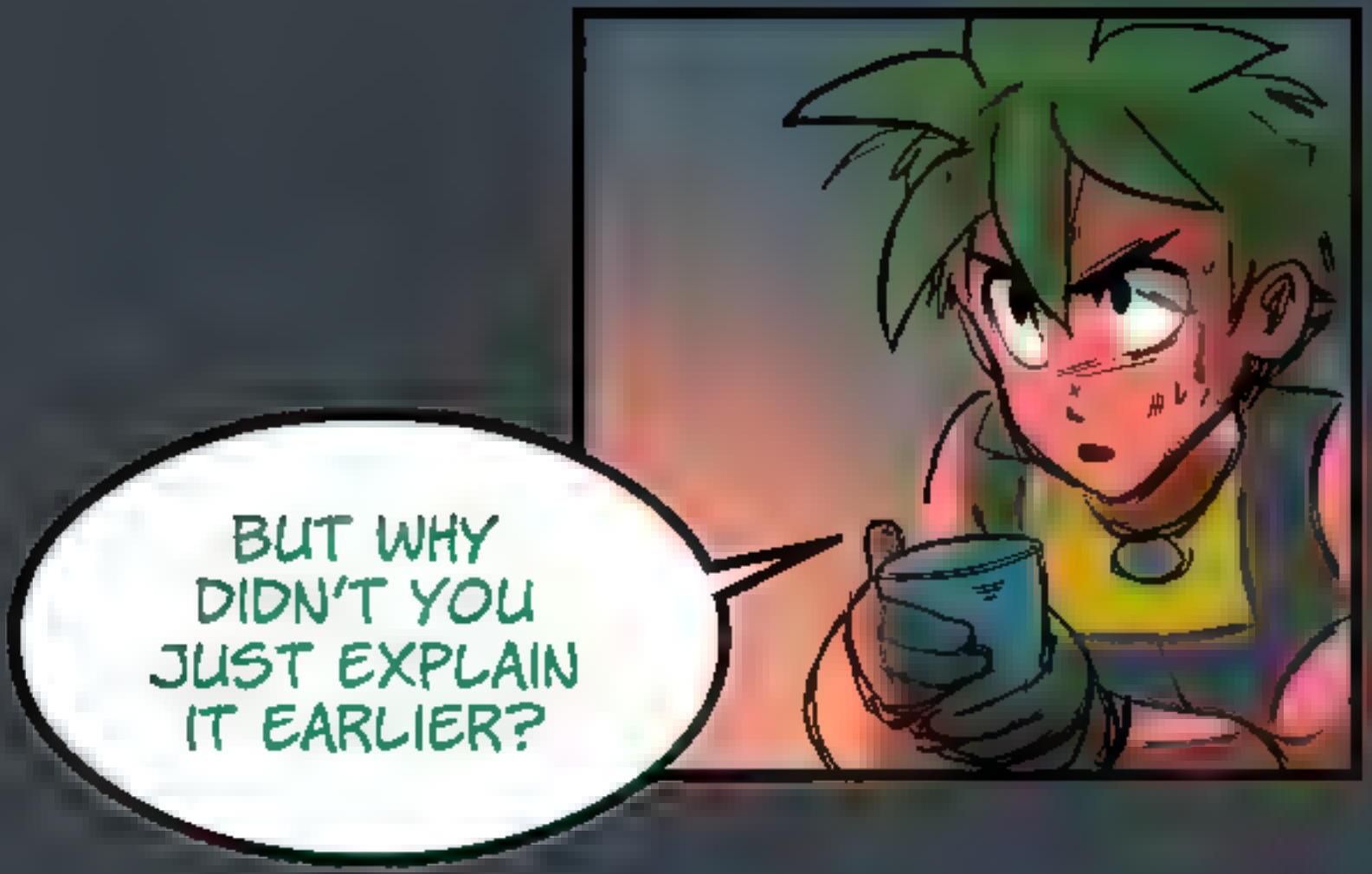

OH, RIGHT... THAT VEGETABLE. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING WITH SUCH POTENT RESTORATIVE PROPERTIES... WHAT IS IT?

"HEART BEETS".

THEY'RE EVEN MORE POTENT WHEN YOU CAN MAKE THEM INTO A TEA LIKE THIS.

OR BETTER YET, A PILL.


SIGH
IF ALL OF THIS IS TRUE... I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ACTED LIKE THE SWORDS WERE SO IMPORTANT.


BUT WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST EXPLAIN IT EARLIER?

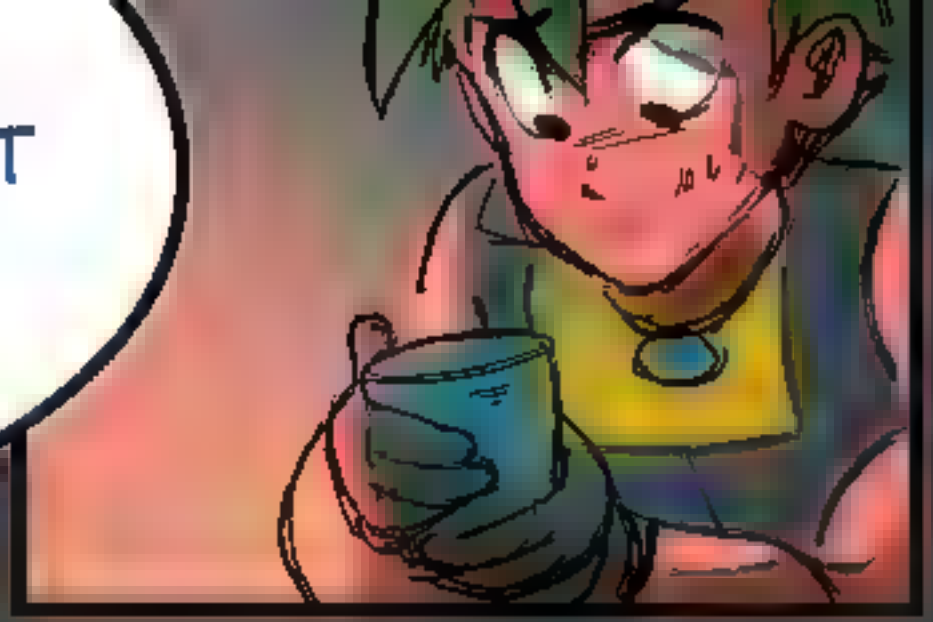
WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD HAPPEN IF FOUR DROWNING PEOPLE KNEW THERE WAS ONLY ONE LIFE VEST?
I'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR A LONG TIME, AND THERE ARE PEOPLE

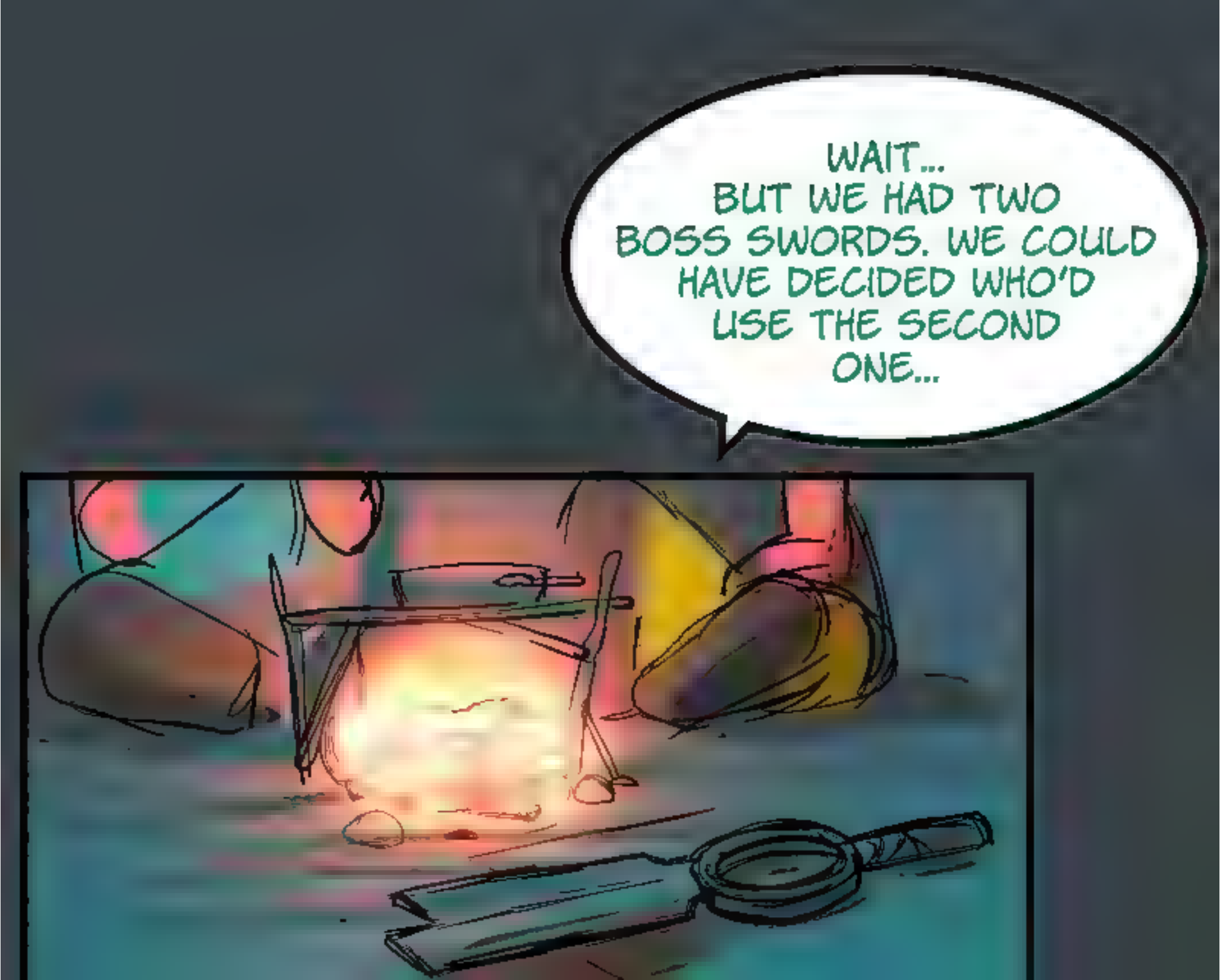
COUNTING ON ME.

IF I DON'T RETURN WITH THE SWORD, WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN TO THEM?

I CAN'T RISK

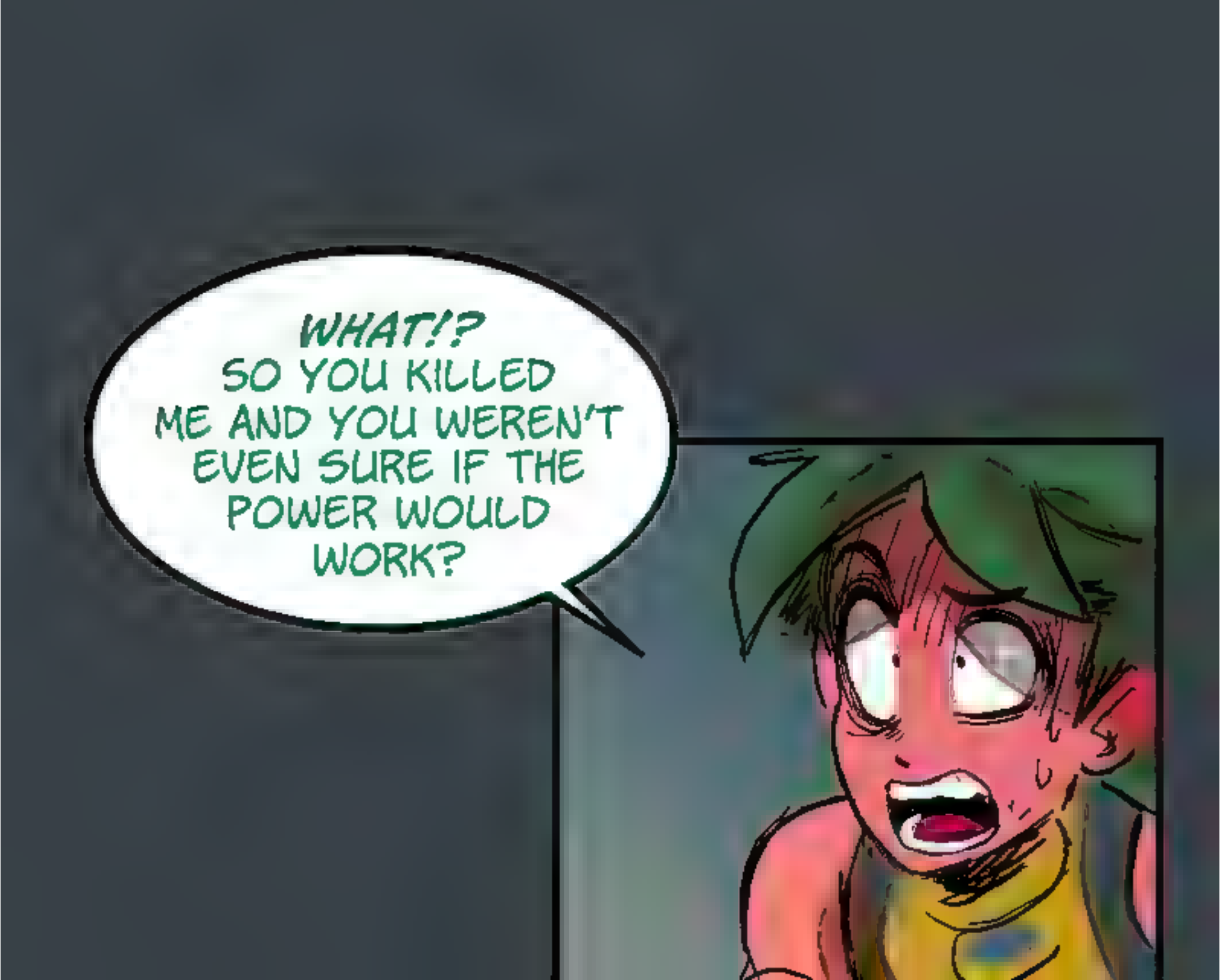
CAN'T RISK THE SUCCESS OF MY MISSION ON ACCOUNT OF EVERY LOST AND SCARED PERSON I MEET.

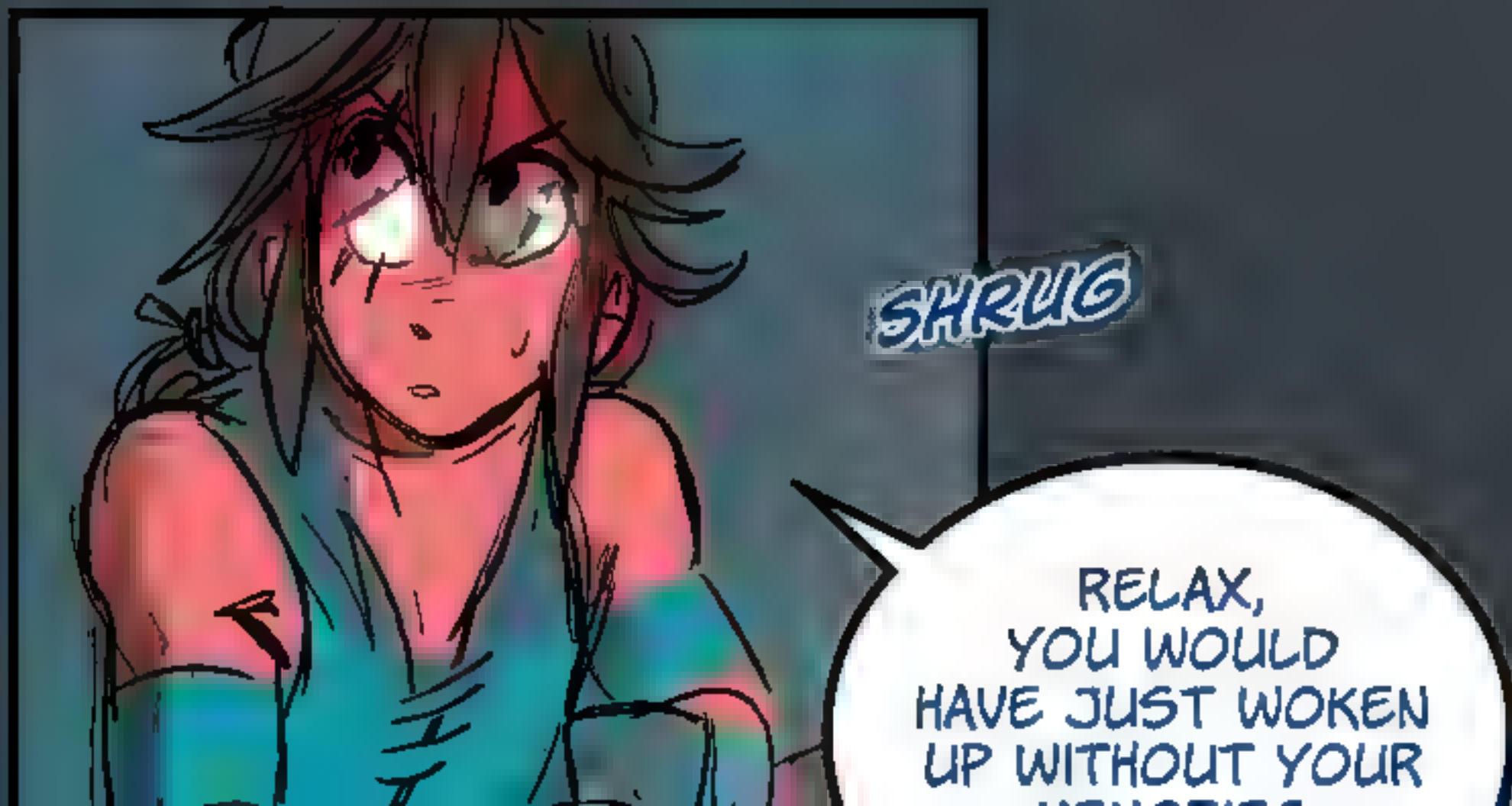



WAIT...
BUT WE HAD TWO BOSS SWORDS. WE COULD HAVE DECIDED WHO'D USE THE SECOND ONE...

RIGHT... BUT ONE WAS BROKEN. I WASN'T SURE IF IT WOULD WORK THE SAME.

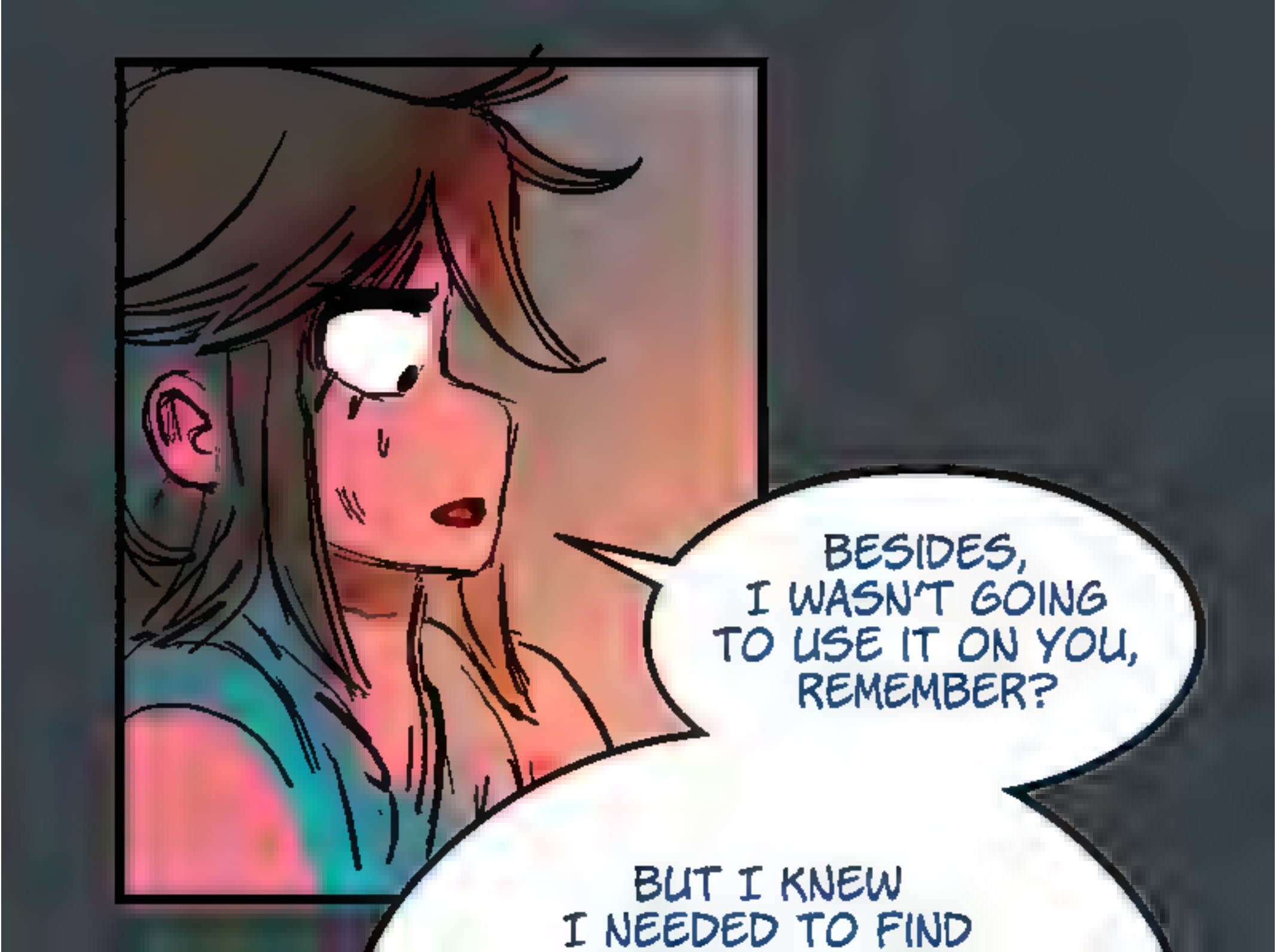
SIP

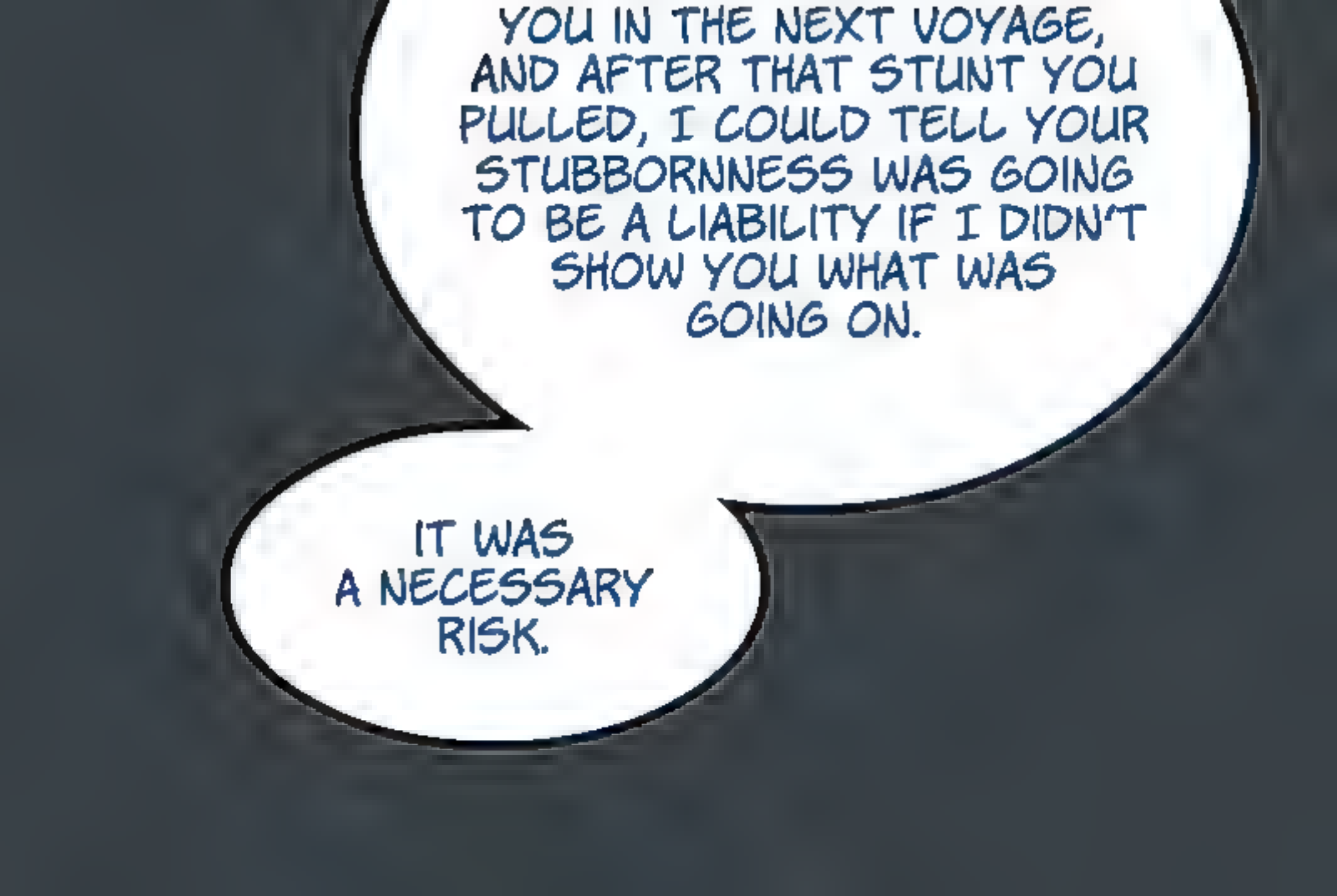

WHAT!?
SO YOU KILLED ME AND YOU WEREN'T EVEN SURE IF THE POWER WOULD WORK?


SHRUG
RELAX, YOU WOULD HAVE JUST WOKEN UP WITHOUT YOUR

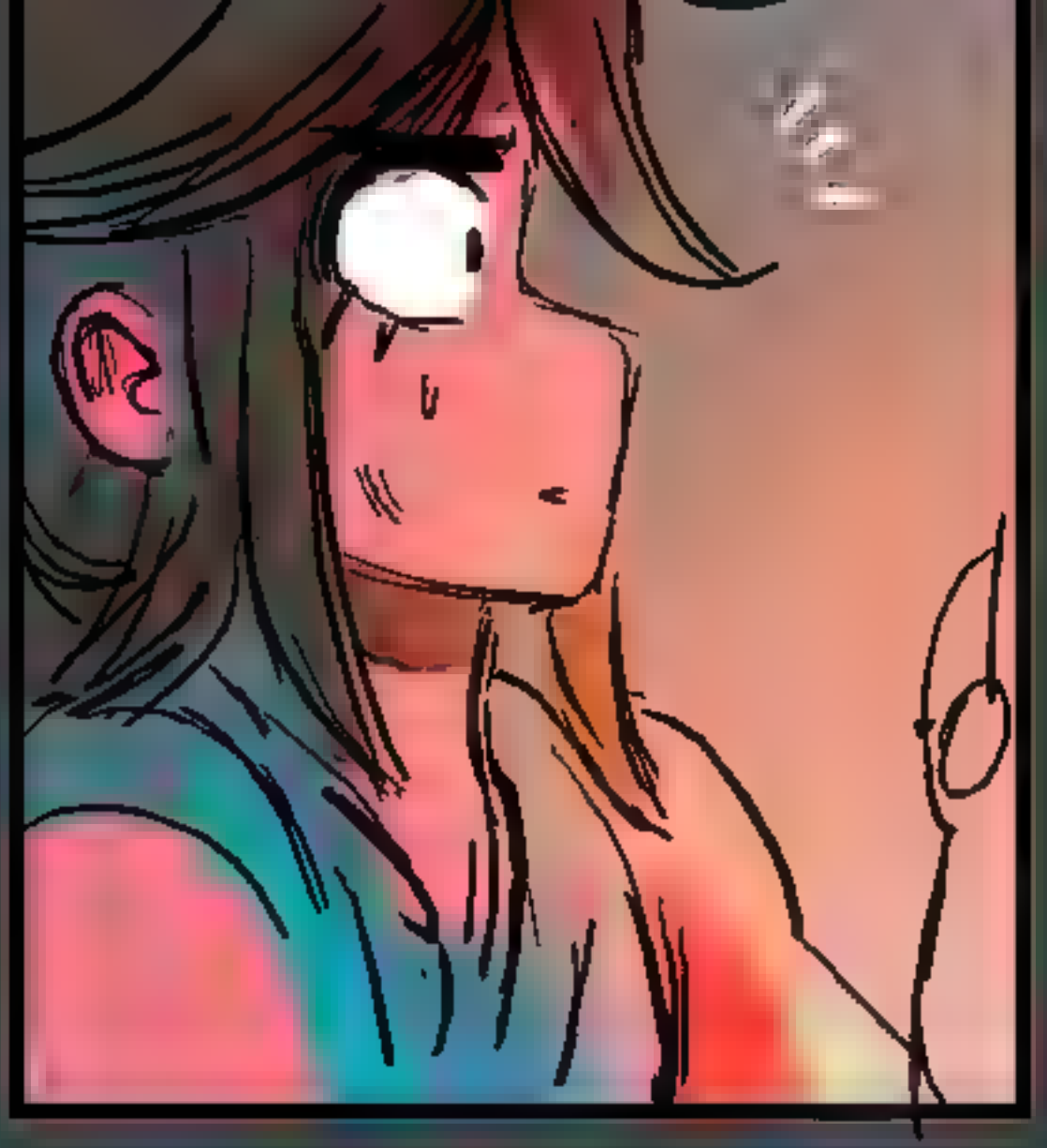
MEMORIES AGAIN.

IT'S STILL A BETTER DEATH THAN BEING DEVOURED BY SHADOWS OR CRUSHED BY ONE, DON'T YOU THINK?

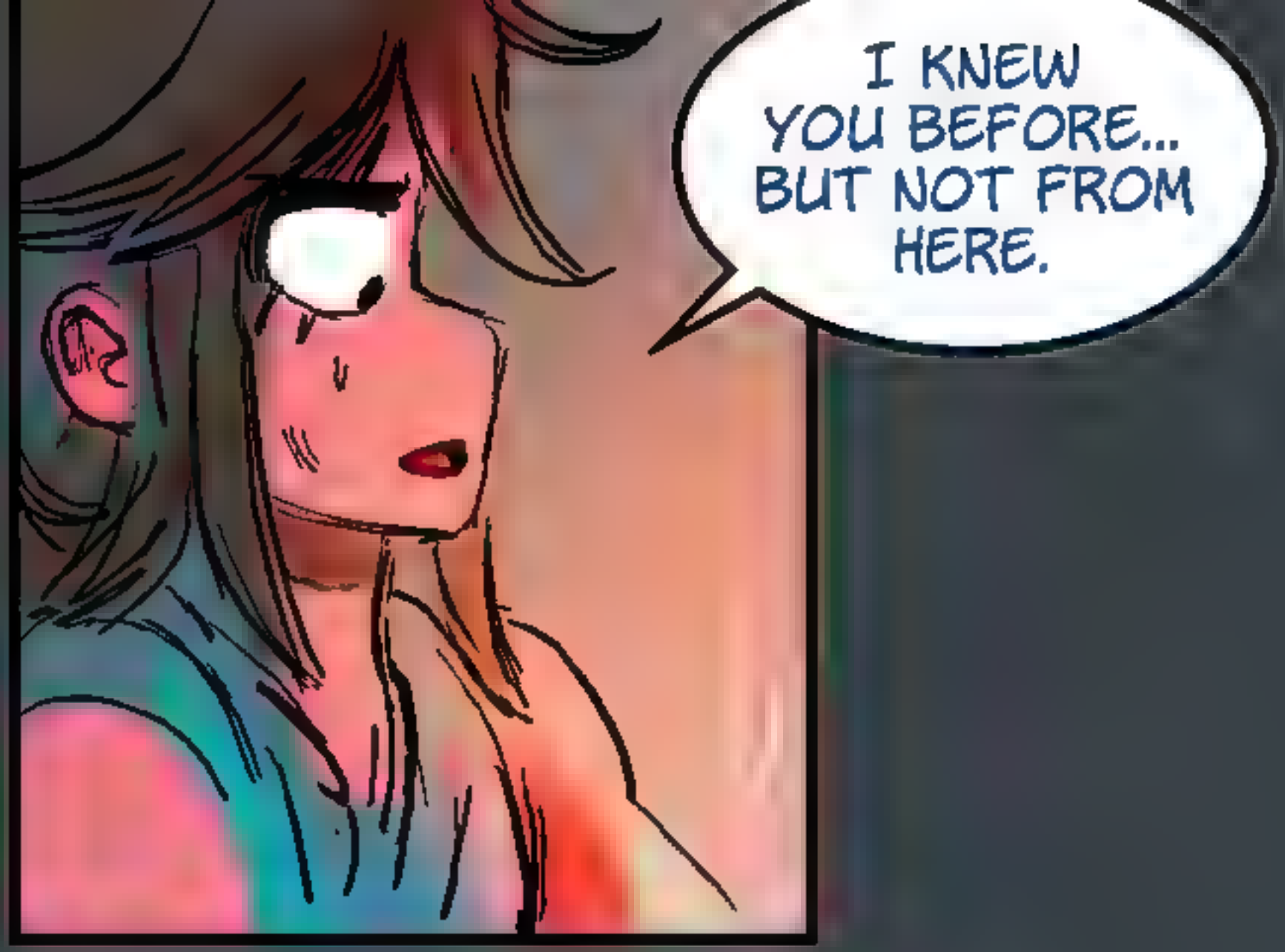

BESIDES, I WASN'T GOING TO USE IT ON YOU, REMEMBER?
BUT I KNEW I NEEDED TO FIND


YOU IN THE NEXT VOYAGE, AND AFTER THAT STUNT YOU PULLED, I COULD TELL YOUR STUBBORNNESS WAS GOING TO BE A LIABILITY IF I DIDN'T SHOW YOU WHAT WAS GOING ON.
IT WAS A NECESSARY RISK.

BUT...
WHY *HAVE* YOU BEEN LOOKING FOR ME?
WHEN WE FIRST MET, YOU SEEMED TO EXPECT ME TO REMEMBER SOMETHING...
BUT YOU JUST TOLD ME THAT WAS



THE FIRST TIME WE'D MET IN A VOYAGE.


I KNEW YOU BEFORE... BUT NOT FROM HERE.

YOU WERE ONE OF US... WE MET IN THE ROOM OF SWORDS.

I--
WHAT?!

ITS... DIFFICULT TO TALK ABOUT.

BASICALLY, YOU WENT MISSING SOME TIME AGO... IT WASN'T GOOD. SEVERAL OTHER PEOPLE DISAPPEARED TOO, AND WE LOST MANY OF THE SWORDS WE'D COLLECTED.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...

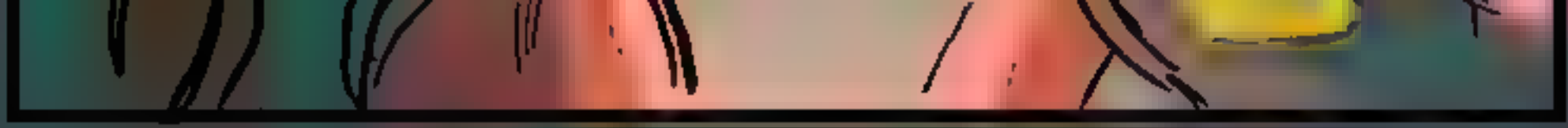
CAN IT BE TRUE? BUT I DON'T REMEMBER *ANYTHING* LIKE THAT.
HE DOES SEEM PRETTY UPSET, THOUGH... I WONDER IF HE LOST SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO HIM...

...I'M SORRY.

...
THE POINT IS... WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU AND I NEED TO BRING YOU BACK WITH ME.

...AND TORI AND SYLVIA?
IF WE RESET, THEN...

THEY'RE FINE.



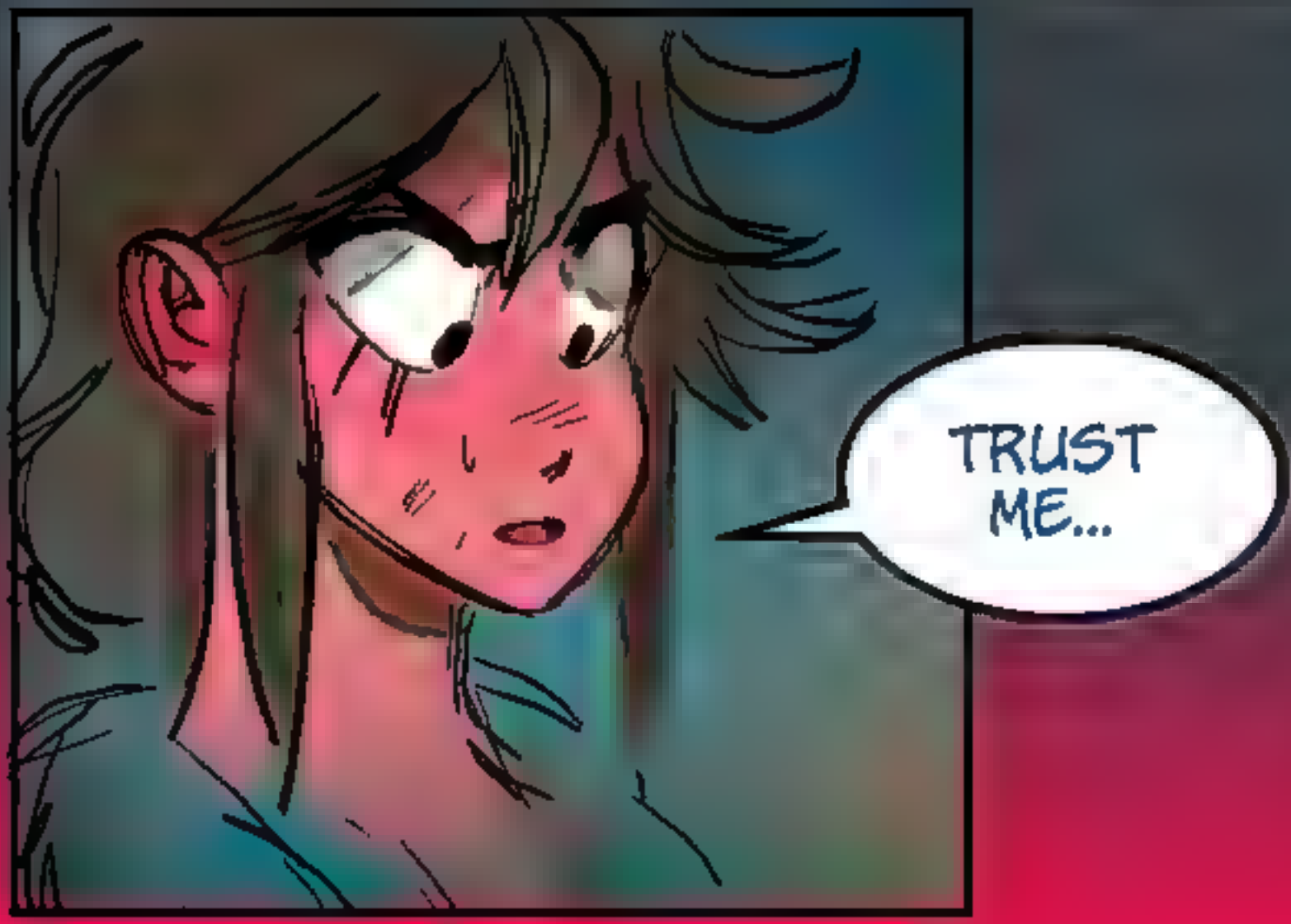
WE CAN'T LEAVE THEM HERE...
WE NEED TO FIND THEM--

OBVIOUSLY.

STAND

WE'LL NEED THEIR HELP TO GET THE SECOND PIECE OF THAT SWORD.
IT SHOULD STILL BE WITH TWO... AS LONG AS THAT'S TRUE, LUCK IS ON OUR

SIDE.
IT DIDN'T FEEL VERY LUCKY LAST TIME


TRUST ME...

IN THE HANDS OF AN ENEMY, THE BOSS SWORDS MULTIPLY THEIR STRENGTH, ENDURANCE AND CAN EVEN GRANT EXTRAORDINARY POWERS.

THAT'S WHY THE BOSSES ARE SO STRONG.
AND IF ANOTHER WORTHY FOE ENDS UP LAYING CLAIM TO THE SWORD, THEY WILL ALSO BECOME A BOSS.

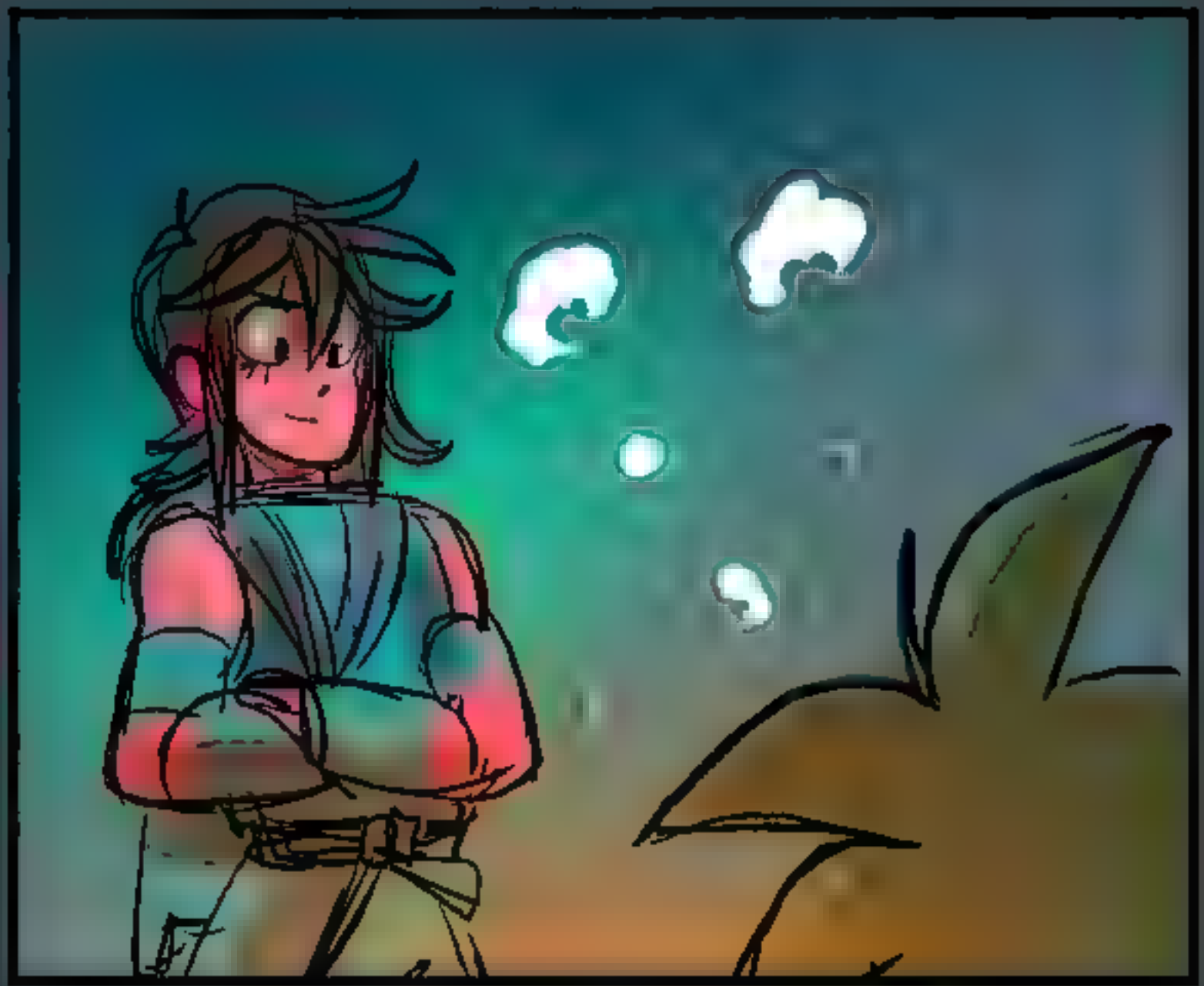
IT'S RARE,
BUT SOMETIMES
THINGS WILL HAPPEN
LIKE IN THIS REALM
WHERE THE DEMI-BOSSES,
OR WARDENS, WILL SCHEME
TO OVERTHROW THE
MAIN BOSS.

HOWEVER,
IN THIS CASE, SINCE
THE SWORD IS BROKEN,
TWO HASN'T BEEN ABLE
TO COMPLETE THE
TRANSFORMATION PROCESS
AND ONE IS NOT AT
FULL STRENGTH.

THIS IS THE BEST TIME TO STRIKE. IF WE MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY, WE COULD BE STUCK HERE FOR A VERY LONG TIME BEFORE WE'D BE PREPARED TO TAKE ON A BOSS.

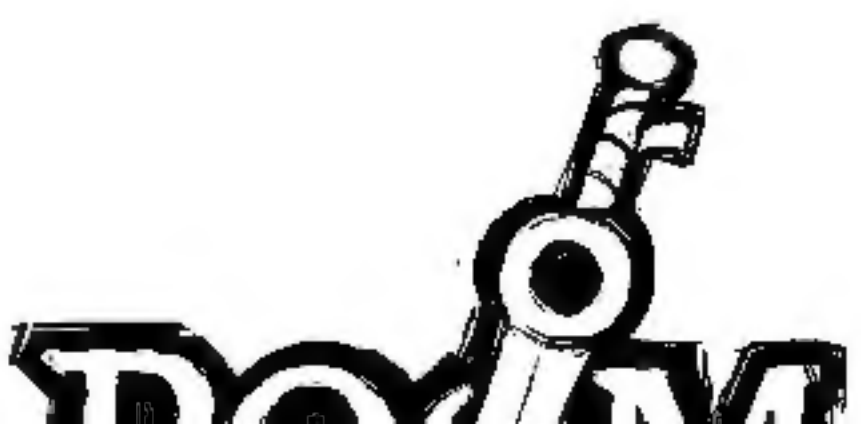
THEN
WHAT ARE WE
WAITING FOR?

YOU.



YOU NEED TO GET STRONGER.

COME ON.



/CHAPTER 32 END\

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